

ROCK N ROLL PURGATORY

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Issue #15

THE ONE MAN BAND ISSUE!

Almighty Do Me A Favor * John Schooley * Bloodshot Bill
Reverend Beat-Man * King Louie * Ghostwriter * Al Foul
Scott H. Biram * Haunted George * Jeffrey Novak

ALSO FEATURING:

TOYS THAT KILL
UNCLE SCRATCH'S
GOSPEL REVIVAL
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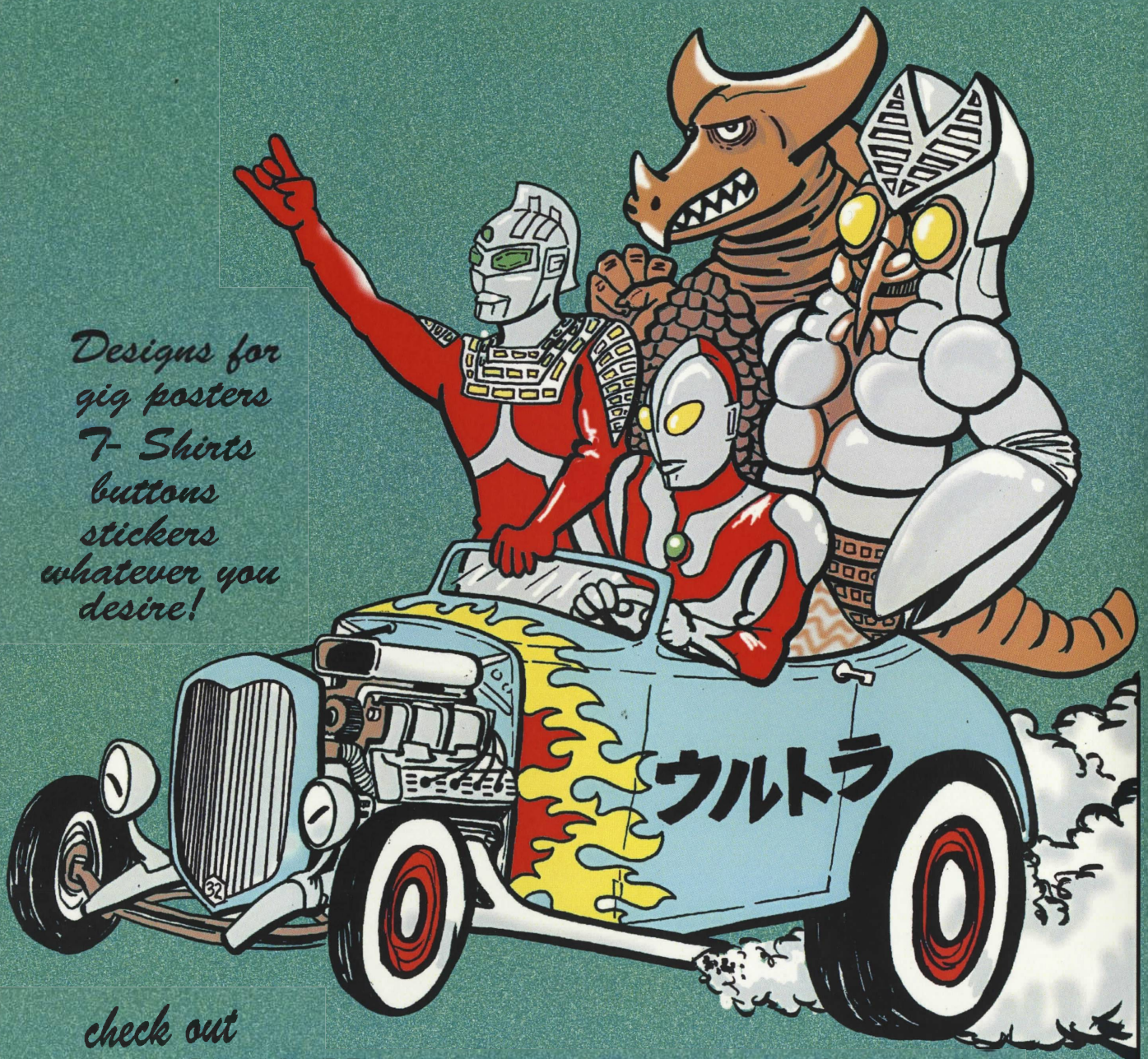
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Girl on Cover: Karen Tomaszewski

Cover Photo: Dave Orzechowski

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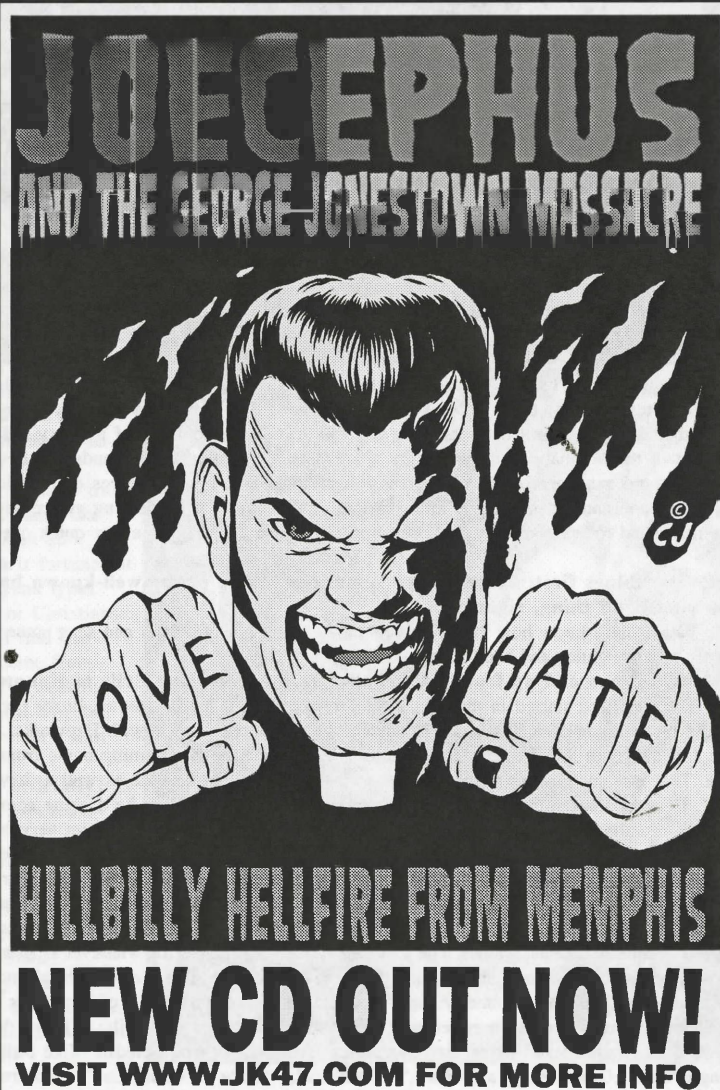
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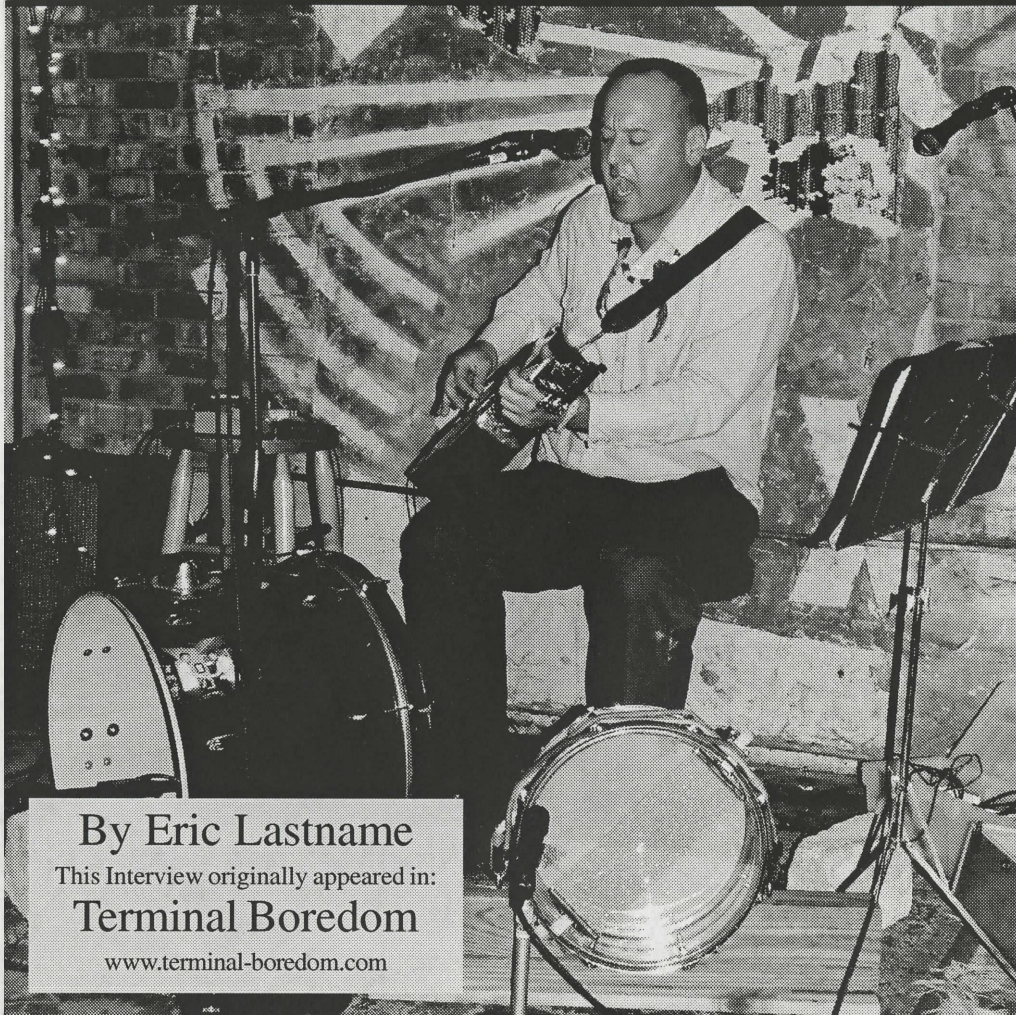
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"HAUNTED" GEORGE



By Eric Lastname

This Interview originally appeared in:

Terminal Boredom

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My introduction to Haunted George, otherwise known as the one-man band of ex-Beguiled and Necessary Evils member Steve Pallow, came about two months ago. "The Devil's Canyon." A paranoid, nightmarish and altogether disturbed aural hallucination; each drum thud the lockstep of a weary fella who's lost himself in the twilight of the uninhabited desert; every space between beats a sparse landscape devoid of humanity, yet rife with fear and exaggerated panic. A creepy dirge that calls to mind pieces of American folklore, the extraterrestrial, the supernatural, murder. Y'know, a BAD TRIP. And not something you're bound to hear from any other one man band today. Naturally, I flipped out and had to ask the guy a few quick questions. He obliged...

OK, first things first: You did some time in a couple pretty well-known bands before doing your one man band thing, right?

HG: Well I don't know how "well known" they are but I played bass and sang some songs in The Beguiled and I played rhythm guitar and sang all the songs in The Necessary Evils.

So how did you end up from the Beguiled to the Necessary Evils to Haunted George?

HG: The Beguiled started in the mid-1980's, broke up, got back together, broke up, got back together and finally broke up in 1994 just a few months after we toured Europe with Fireworks. Mike Ball, the guitarist for The Beguiled was killed instantly by a drunk driver when he was coming home from a Fireworks show in Santa Ana. That was such a tragedy because he was so talented and creative as well as having really good taste in stuff. He was constantly turning me on to some book or record that he'd come across. I was a total mess for about 6 months after Mike died. He was like my brother and I still miss him very much to this day. For years during The Beguiled, Mike and I wrote tons of songs, with me writing the words and singing and Mike making the guitar riffs and the chord changes. For a rhythm section we had about 5 to 10 reel to reel tape recorders with various tape loops running making everything from straight beats and bass lines to abstract noise. We called it "The Sound Lab" and on the tapes we made Mike would call himself "Radio Brain" and I would call myself "Snuff Maximus." When The Beguiled couldn't practice for whatever reason, we'd do Sound Lab. I have several hours [of] "Sound Lab" recordings, some of it sounds like a regular band and some of it is completely abstract. After Mike died, James Arthur was dealing with the break up of Fireworks and he came out to California from Texas and it ended up turning into The Necessary Evils. A lot of the Necessary Evils' material came from "Sound Lab" songs. Any Necessary Evil record that co-credits Mike Ball is originally a "Sound Lab" song: "Twist, Grind, Rock and Burn," "Thrill Pill," "State of Confusion," "Motorwitch" and many more. The Necessary Evils lasted about 4 or 5 years and broke up because all the guys started moving out of state. I was

also getting depressed playing punk/rock 'n' roll. I was feeling old and tired. After the Necessary Evils broke up, I kind of stopped playing music for a while. I hardly touched a guitar and stopped listening to any kind of music that wasn't pre-1940's country or blues. I stopped listening to any kind of Rock'n'roll or Punk. It was getting to where electrified guitar was starting to sound foreign to me and stuff with drums in it was even stranger. I eventually picked up the guitar again and I started trying to write stuff that I could play and sing acoustically like Jimmie Rodgers, early Gene Autry and Cliff Carlisle. At the same time I wanted it also to sound like stuff that I had written in other bands. I was really trying to write Western songs. Some of the songs sounded like an acoustic-folk version of the Necessary Evils and The Beguiled. Other stuff had a weird rockabilly/country/folk sound that I never really got to put into either of those other bands. During this time I was still doing abstract stuff as "Snuff Maximus" and some of it is acoustic guitar, Roland synthesizer, and tape loops over songs about murder and ghosts in the desert. How that turned into Haunted George is that I had already been playing a little with a kick drum. I had also done a thing that I'd seen John Lee Hooker do and that is to tap on a cutting board with hard soled shoes to make a beat. I saw him at the Golden Bear when I was in high school and he did that. They just put a spot light on him and the band took a break. He sat there by himself tapping his foot while singing and picking. It was the highlight of the set as far as I was concerned because all those guys in back up bands usually just are awful. So when I started doing Haunted George, I was going for that kind of thing; the lone guitar troubadour, just a guy with a guitar pickin' and crooning, but I'm such a terrible guitar player [and] I can't sing so it doesn't work. Sometime in late 2004, after hearing for a while guys like John Schooley, Bloodshot Bill, and King Louie, I decided to try out the fuller drum sound for myself. Once I did that it was an epiphany for me because it masked, a little bit, my lack of talent in the vocals and picking department.

Was the one-man band decision a conscious choice, or did it just kind of happen that way?

HG: It's a little bit of both really. I'm about the millionth guy on this one man band wagon. I can't deny that. 2005 was really the year of the One Man Band. So many came out that now I think people are sick of it. The last thing I want to do I look like some loser that's jumping on the latest rock trend, but two things happened that made Haunted George really take off for me; James Arthur started Hook or Crook records, and Myspace. When James started his label he came to me and said that he wanted to do a "Snuff Maximus" abstract/noise record. I never thought that I would ever have a noise record out on vinyl and was really excited about it. I told him, "I have this other stuff that I've been doing with guitar and drums too if you want to hear that." Once he heard Haunted George he changed his mind to doing that. At one point the Hook or Crook LP "Panther Howl" was going to come out with an insert CD of 70 minutes worth of abstract space/echo noise called "Sounds from the Beyond," but I think now that idea has been scrapped. Second thing is during all this; I found out about Myspace and started posting my music on that site. Myspace is both really cool and incredibly lame at the same time. I don't know anything about setting up a web site, so to be able to post songs and information is a beautiful thing. I can listen to other bands, we can contact each other. On the other hand, all the squares are just a bummer; guys without shirts on, wearing sideways baseball caps, holding up beers, making "gang" signs with captions like, "chILLin' wlf mY hoMMeez n sUm sUdz." That kind of shit just makes me want to commit murder. Did you see that movie "Hostel"? I would pay the Russian gangsters good money to torture violently and slowly some of those myspace creeps... But I'm on there too, so what the hell.

You described your stuff as "Sounds for driving in the desert at night" -- does it have to be the desert? I like to listen to this sort of stuff -- lonely, moody stuff like the Scientists or the Beguiled -- and drive around the woods at night.

HG: You have my permission to listen to it in the woods. I love the woods too.

How does the landscape around you affect what you do, anyway? I imagine you live in one helluva desolate area.

HG: My nearest neighbor is about 3/4 of a mile away and I'm on a dirt road that runs about two miles till pavement. I hear packs of coyotes every night and morning. It's very quiet. I don't hear any traffic noise. I can see the Milky Way at night. I can hear a car coming from about 1/2 a mile away. I'm so used to the quiet that the low rumble of an engine, even a modern quiet one, will pop me up. Then I grab my rifle, peek through the window blinds and look at them though my binoculars while I scribble down notes and mumble. As far as it affecting me musically, one of my goals is to bring "western," as in "country/western" into my music. My grandma lived in the Mojave Desert since the 1930's and loved country music but always told me that she liked "western" better. When I asked her what the difference between the two was she said that country was about Honky Tonks, drinking, break ups, working a job, that sort of thing and western was more about being outdoors, the land, Indians, critters and things like that. **Songs like "Graves in the Desert" and "Shotgun in My Mouth" certainly lend themselves to a dark, isolated lone-man approach... Do you think they'd work as well with a full band?**

HG: They might, I'd have to try it out and see. I love to try some of my stuff with other musicians but getting people together can be such trouble. I just keep going by myself. That's the truly great thing about a one man band. I can play whenever I feel like it; Sunday morning, Tuesday afternoon... whenever the mood hits. I don't have to call a bunch of guys and arrange anything. **What's your set-up like live? It sounds like there might be a few overdubs on the recordings.**

HG: With the exception of the abstract/noise stuff that I do there are NO over dubs on ANY of my recordings! It's all live! It's also ALL mono. In fact, EVERYTHING that I record is done on this old, late 1970's cassette recorder that just happens to have a great condenser mic in it. It looks like a little lunch box. One day the lunch box is going to crap out on me. I have no idea what I'm going to do. As far as the live set-up, it's a pain in the ass. It's more stuff than you'd think. I have a little food cart next to me that I put all my effects boxes on so that I can reach over and tweak my sound while a play. I might have to strip it down and go rawer in the future because it's a pain to haul around.

Where the fuck did you come up with that riff for "The Devil's Canyon"?

HG: Out of nowhere...Off the top of my head. A lot of times I write lyrics ahead of time and then I set them up in front of me, grab my guitar with nothing planned note-wise and they just come out on the first or second try. "The Devil's Canyon" was one of those.

Why the Lamps cover?

HG: Monty Buckles is incredible and the Lamps are a great band. We might do a split single together and so I learned four of their songs. I played live with them and played "Rototiller," "Ron Campbell" and "Hot Plate." They played my song, "Gonna Lynch You." I can also play "Bertha Walt".

Favorite ghost/supernatural story?

HG: My favorites are the ones that come from people that you wouldn't expect. I met an ex-cop out here in the desert. He lives in his car because he got major back problems and his wife left him after 20 years of marriage while he was in the hospital. His car seat is the only place he says that he can rest comfortably and get a good night's sleep. So he lives off his pension, traveling from park to park and sleeping in his car. He told me all kinds of crazy stories about abandoned, haunted buildings in Los Angeles County and the high desert. He said that in the 70's and 80's there used to be an abandoned movie theater, built in the 1920's that they would get calls to. The police would pull up and hear a movie playing and lights on and then when they went in there was nothing. He said that every cop knew about this place and just ignored the calls after a while, but they would always send new guys over there to freak them out. He said the guys would come back ashen faced and quiet. This guy is great. I want to tape record him before he's gone one day. Once in the middle of talking, he looks out to the horizon and says, "You know, this old desert is a graveyard; Indians, Chinese gangsters, Mexican banditos, mobsters...They're all buried out here. When Judgment Day comes and the dead rise this place is gonna be shoulder to shoulder with the tormented..." I was in awe after he said that. I repeated it to myself and then said, "Hang on, I've got to get something out of my truck" and then I immediately wrote down what he just said in a notebook. Another recent one is my boss is a construction chief with the state of California, real high up on the chain of command but a complete redneck, desert rat. He told me about seeing "a weird lookin' dude with a dog chewed mullet" running around a job site 3 days in a row while he was working a job near the ocean in Ventura County. On the third day they were digging a trench for a pipe and came across a Chumash Indian burial site. They had to stop construction and he ended up reporting it to a Chumash Indian Museum. He tells me, "There's the fuckin' dude with that dog chewed mullet in a painting on the wall! A fucking chumash Indian, they all had that fuckin' dog chewed mullet! I told them to transfer me to different job." When I told him that I knew an Italian girl that lived in a 400 year old villa and claimed the ghost of a disembodied hand tormented her family he laughed and looked at me like I was crazy. I could go on and on. I love weird campfire stories; stuff that people swear is true. I also like stories about curses and things like "The Suicide Table" where seven men all committed suicide after loosing their fortunes at some certain Faro table. A lot of punk types that I know don't like old people or Christians or physically disabled people and I find that some of the most bizarre stories come from these folks. I meet people when I'm working, we'll get to talking, after a while I'll turn the conversation in a certain direction and I start hearing real wild and crazy stuff.

What do you have coming out officially? Is there a Hook or Crook single forthcoming?

HG: It's going to be a full LP called "Panther Howl" with 13 songs on it. I have a 7" single with four "songs" coming out on Solid Sex Lovie Doll some time soon. One of the 4 cuts is noise track that was recorded as "Snuff Maximus" in 1992. I also have my own "label" that is called Dimension Zero, but it's really just me pressing up CD-R's at home. On Dimension Zero I have a full catalogue of stuff.



[Ed. Note: Since this interview was originally done, Haunted George has had a CD come out on Dead Beat Records entitled "Bone Hauler."]

Any tour plans in the works?

HG: No. Not yet...But there's aways tomorrow.

Check out some of Haunted George's tunes at his Myspace page: <http://www.myspace.com/hauntedgeorge> And if you know what's good for you, jump on the LP and singles.

* Two live photos by Ezra Haidet at SxSW 04/06



Uncle Scratch's Gospel Revival

"The devil eats his own nut sack," proclaims Brother Ed to a spiritually tenuous crowd at the Beachland Tavern. "I saw that on a sign in Kentucky."

"Was nut sack one word or two?" inquires Brother Ant, knowing the devil is in the details.

"Two," comes the answer. "That's the way they do it down in Kentucky."

Uncle Scratch have a score to settle with Satan. This devout duo has been known to take their missionary message to the sidewalks outside the many local dens of iniquity where the misguided cavort in an alcoholic stupor to the beguiling sounds of sin. Brother Ed gives a biblical thumping to his drum kit made from cardboard feed barrels and metal milk crates, occasionally pausing to make the sign of the cross with the tattered sticks. All the while Brother Ant proselytizes through a megaphone as he abuses his

battered Stratocaster in an effort to exorcise the screeching demons within. Both shell-shocked veterans of the Cleveland music scene, Ant used to drum in Psychobilly Cadillac and Satan's Satellites before heeding his higher calling, and Brother Ed played with fire in Hellvis and the Stompin' Pompadors before pairing it with the brimstone of Uncle Scratch.

I met with these religious rogues in Lakewood, Ohio, back in February 2005. I wanted to know how they set about strong-arming Satan into submission. I had heard that it all began at Brother Ed's now sadly defunct video store, B-ware, which had boasted the most extensive collection of horror, exploitation, and rare films for a hundred miles in any direction. - Ben Lybarger

RRP: Is it true that you two met when Brother Ant came into your store looking for "Man Bites Dog?"

Ant: True story. One of them.

Ed: That one and the other true story that we're actually real brothers. We're twins. He was born two weeks before I was.

Ant: I thought we were married like the people from the White Stripes. Actually, he wanted me to get a movie from him one day when I was on a date. That is a pretty nice movie, *Man Bites Dog*. [laughs] He actually suggested it to me.

RRP: Isn't that the French movie about the serial killer who has a documentary film crew following him?

Ed: Yes.

Ant: Mm-Hmm. That girl went runnin' out of my house. Before the movie was going on, actually. [laughs]

Ed: I didn't like the girl so I suggested getting that one.

Ant: Yeah that tramp. Can we print her name?

RRP: Sure.

Ant: Nah, I forgot her name. She had a kid I never met. The kid was hot. [laughs] She could move... but uh, Brother Ed and I actually met each other before. We were jammin' with Sister Amber at the time.

Ed: Yeah, were were a three-piece to start off.

Ant: Four pieces: you and me and her two boobs. We actually had to kick her out of the band because her breasts were distracting us. She was very beautiful.

Ed: We didn't really boot her out we just didn't practice, and then we got together and started writing the ultimate rock experience.

Ant: I got some trash cans that we had to build the band around. It's built around your drum kit, Brother Ed. You had some stuff you didn't want to throw out...

Ed: We practiced for one hour on a Wednesday, one hour on a Thursday, wrote eight songs and played out on a Friday. That is true Rock-n-Roll.

Ant: What were we called then, didn't we have a different name? It was The Uncle Scratch's Gospel Revival.

RRP: What made you drop the "The"?

Ant: Somebody had that name already. [laughs]

Ed: I think we were originally gonna be called Uncle Scratch's Gospel Trio, with the two-piece.

Ant: Uncle Scratch's Gospel Duo... we should do that.

Ed: No, Trio.

Ant: But I mean now...

Ed: With Jesus.

Ant: That doesn't make any sense, scratch that from the tape.

RRP: So the Trio would be like the Trinity?

Ant: We just like doin' it, just the two of us. We met, we jammed, for what? Two hours?

Ed: Yeah, we wrote 8 songs in two hours and started playin' out.

Ant: But yeah, I did get that video from you, and people were raping and killing each other by the end of it. Kids were on it, and then they'd kill the kid with a pillow. I really appreciate that. I appreciate you suggesting that movie, Brother Ed. On my honeymoon he suggested *Schindler's List*.

RRP: I've read that you guys think stages are for pussy bands, so where have some of your guerilla sidewalk gigs been?

Ed: Actually we played out here once in front of Capsule. That was a scooter show and the police came and shut our show down.

Ant: They threatened to impale Brother Ed with a nightstick, but I think the police were nice enough to let us play one more song. We said, "please don't beat us with that baton."

Ed: We dedicated that song to the Lakewood Police Department for not billy-clubbing us to death, then made sure we packed up all our equipment and left.

Ant: We also played in front of the Agora for the Reverend Horton Heat... good show. Then we played in front of the Beachland in late December, that was a terrible show. Freezing cold.



Photo by Lullaby Design

RRP: Did you make any tips?

Ed: Yeah, we did pretty good. I think we did about 40 bucks.

Ant: I haven't seen any of that money. Quote me on that.

RRP: Well, the club does take their cut.

Ant: Yeah, the club... we got a bunch of tissues.

Ed: We played the MTV Headbanger's Ball.

Godsmack was playing so we played in the parking lot.

Ant: We had the name "Devilsmack" that night.

Ed: We were yelling at the crowd and the WMMS bands.

RRP: How did that go over?

Ed: Good. It went over really well.

Ant: They liked it; it was good.

Ed: We were out there yelling through the megaphone that Godsmack sucks and nobody smacks our God around.

Ant: We haven't gone out recently, though.

Ed: Just that last one in December.

Ant: We learned. We're done for the winter.

Ed: We played from 7:30 to 10:00 at night out in the below 20 degree weather.

Ant: We do actually prefer not to play on the stage if we do go into clubs. We'll play off to the side somewhere, they'll stick us by the bathrooms and we'll play in between bands.

RRP: Is that to signify your humbleness?

Ant: Yes, that is it.

Ed: Well, we'll let the bands that suck play on the stage... the devil worshipping bands.

RRP: So you don't want to be revered as false idols?

Ant: Well, I wouldn't go that far. [laughs] No, we suck and they can't complain. What do you expect from a band by the side of the restrooms? Very little.

Ed: But then we blow 'em away with our talent.

Ant: We like to bring our own gear, our own PA, and our own light show, which is that portable Jesus.

RRP: So how did Jesus come into your life?

Ant: What did he say? I can't hear him. I'm losing my hearing.

RRP: [Louder] How did Jesus come into your life?

Ant: Oooooohaaaaahhhh!

Ed: He's always been there with us. At some point He pulled us aside and said "rock'n'roll music is in a very sad state right now. Everybody's lovin' the devil. I need a band to go out there and kick the devil's ass." That's what it's about. So He told Brother Ant and I to go therewith and rock, and that's what we've been doing.

Ant: Being raised very Catholic, that is possible. A lot of snakes around the house. Parents were fighting with them.

Ed: We got our first megaphones at the age of four, and we used to go down to Camm's Corner, remember that? We used to stand on the bus stop benches and preach the Word to the people? Remember that?

Ant: The devil is a pussy. Did we used to say that?

Ed: Yeah, we used to say that all the time. That's one of my catch phrases I learned at the age of four: The devil is a pussy-ass bitch.

Ant: I think there are too many devil bands out there. That is what's wrong with rock'n'roll. We need to purify it. Who are the big bands now? You got Led Zeppelin, you got Black Sabbath...

Ed: Boys II Men

Ant: The Eagles. The devil bands popular with the kids.

Ed: It's not easy being a Christian rock'n'roll band.

Ant: Jesus number one. Devil number two.

RRP: So where else do you see Satan lurking besides the rock'n'roll scene?

Ed: Oh God, he's everywhere.

Ant: Women. Women!

Ed: The devil is a pussy, and pussy is the devil.

Ant: We've spent many days trying to bang the



devil out of many Uncle Scratch groupies.

Ed: And work.

Ant: Yes, work is devil.

Ed: The U.S. government could be the devil.

Ant: Yes, the U.S. government is the devil. Walmart is the devil.

Ed: Walmart is definitely the devil. Clearly a satanic corporation that's gonna destroy the United States.

Ant: We sent a memo to President Bush about Operation Free Walmart. It's the next invasion. Do you work at Walmart?

RRP: Nope.

Ant: Okay then, go with that quote. We've insulted some Walmart people before. What other evil corporations do we have?

Ed: Clear Channel.

Ant: What else is the devil, we need one more devil.

Ed: Is booze the devil?

Ant: No booze is not the devil. Booze is a little bit of heaven.

RRP: Nobody is without sin, so what can you tell me about your sinful pasts?

Ed: I don't know. I don't want to speak out of line, but I think we're flawless.

Ant: I've been telling women that for decades. Although I did make a sin against myself a few days ago. We have to experience temptation in order to condemn it.

Ed: Like we always say, there's only one way to really talk about the evils of alcohol, and that is to get drunk and see what happens. You don't want to hear somebody talking anti-drug if they don't know what they are talking about.

Ant: We have sinned in the past, but we're good now. I did buy a Billy Joel album in the early 80's...

RRP: What do you think is the root cause of the rising tides of devil worship? Some say it is at its highest since the dark days of 1987 when heavy metal ruled the Earth. Why are our young people being taken in by Lucifer and his false promises?

Ed: Young people are drawn to the devil because they are weak; they are trend-followers...

Ant: Douche bags.

Ed: Yes, douchebags. It takes a lot of balls to stand up in a club full of heavy metal kids and punk rock kids and declare, as I have done, that the devil is a punk-ass bitch. He licks balls.

Ant: He teabags goats.

Ed: They're just afraid to stand up and admit the devil sucks ass.

RRP: If the devil resorts to trickery and treachery, how can we be sure that he didn't write the bible to send us down the wrong path?

Ed: Oh Jeez...

Ant: I've heard that one before.

Ed: I think our interviewer is a devil worshipper! Brother Ben, are you a devil worshipper? How can you even utter those words? [punctuates the sentence with his fist on the table] Interview over! [starts to leave]

Ant: Brother Ed, what are you doing?

Ed: [returning] I was walking away for dramatic pause.

Ant: Somebody asked me this once: Is God so powerful that He could make a rock that even He couldn't move? It's a very tricky theological karate move.

RRP: You must have an answer.

Ant: I don't think the devil wrote the bible.

Ed: I don't think he wrote it because he doesn't look too good in it.

Ant: He looks like a real jack-off.

Ed: I picture the devil as having a really small penis.

Ant: Really? Are you calling me the devil?

Ed: I don't think the devil is clever enough to write anything like that, although he did write the lyrics to Stairway to Heaven, didn't he?

Ant: 'Cuz there's a Rustle in your Headgrove.' Remember that song? [sings "There's a rustle in your headgrove."] But to your question... that's tricky.

Ed: I am gonna take a leap of faith and say "no."

Ant: It's like espionage. It's like that movie *Trading Places*.

Ed: I think he did write Revelations, though, with the three-headed dragon.

Ant: I thought it was the four horsemen.

Ed: No, that was Metallica.

Ant: Those guys are fucked up. The devil does work in mysterious ways, but we ain't fallin' for any of his shit.

Ed: You know, we've been accused of that haven't we?

Ant: What? Of being devil worshippers?

Photo: Lisa Donnalley

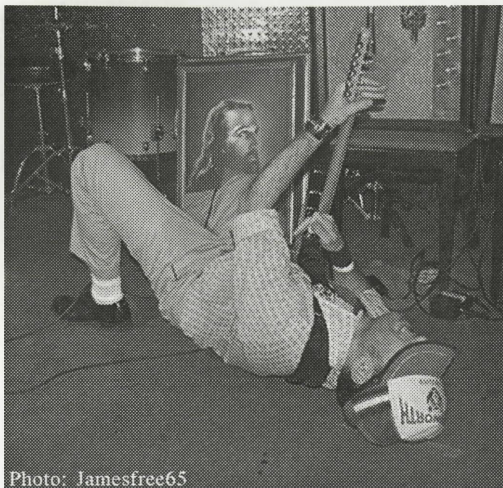


Photo: Jamesfree65

Ed: When we did that show with all those Christian hardcore bands. We got up there and they said...
Ant: They said we were making fun of Jesus
Ed: I read on their BLOG afterwards that we were making fun of the devil in such a way that...
Ant: Made us a pawn of the devil.
RRP: Ah, they thought you were being ironic.
Ed: It just didn't make any sense to me.
Ant: They asked us if we were making fun of the devil or if we were making fun of Jesus, and we had to say no, we were making fun of them. Some would say we are making fun of ourselves. It's very complicated.
Ed: Little Christian kids don't like being talked to a certain way. One kid said that we sucked, and I said "what? You are gonna have to speak a little clearer because your lips are clearly wrapped around the devil's cock." That went over really well at the club.
Ant: When you write the work "cock" use a "c" two asterisks and a "k."
RRP: So you object to written profanity?
Ant: Nah, actually it'll be okay in the context of the devil.
RRP: Has anyone else gotten upset by your antics?
Ant: We have never gotten our asses kicked yet.
Ed: Yet!
Ant: After the guy from Pantera got shot we put a sign up that said "please do not shoot the talent." Some people thought that was in poor taste.
Ed: Poor taste? It was for safety! We don't need some fucking Pantera fan coming up and shooting us in the head.
RRP: Didn't you have a close call with some crazy biker?
Ant: Yeah, the guy said something like "I'm not afraid of the devil, I was born in hell," so Brother Ed said something like...
Ed: You're not gonna be talking like that when the devil is fucking you in the ass in hell!
Ant: Luckily the guy was left speechless.
RRP: So how do you respond to those critics who say that you are just using God as a gimmick to sell records?
Ant: It is untrue. We have not sold any records.
Ed: You ask Amy Grant how many albums she's sold. Or Stryper.
RRP: Okay, since you both represent the right and left hands of the lord, respectively, what can you tell me of His plans for the coming year?
Ed: God definitely has plans for us to win a Grammy.
Ant: That could happen. Oh wait, I thought you said "banging" a granny."
Ed: [into the tape recorder] Testing for proper modulation...
Ant: I consider us men of charity and we're always thinking about the world, so I'm hopin' that God or Jesus, at least for this year, could produce for me an inexpensive roof quote. A cheap quote would be perfect. That's all I'm asking. I need a roof fixed and if God can give me that, I don't give a fuck about

anybody. How about you, Brother Ed?
Ed: I can't add anything to that. That was utter perfection, what you just uttered.
RRP: If your true love is for the Lord, how exactly do you consummate that relationship?
Ant: Damn, that's an odd one...
Ed: Our love for the Lord is not a dirty love, but a tender love.
Ant: Like the kind of love, say, Jerry Lee Lewis would have for his family members.
RRP: I've asked this question before, but you two may be the authorities on this issue. If two sides of a military conflict pray to Jesus for victory, how does He choose which one to help out?
Ed: Do we have any facts or anything to go on?
Ant: He's talkin' about the Civil War. You should never hope that God is on your side, you should hope that you are on God's side. I think as long as fanatics are shooting and killing each other, we're happy.
Ed: God is gonna bless the side with the bigger guns.
Ant: What is that you are saying? The mighty shall inherit the sword. Is that Leviticus?
Ed: Wait a minute, the meek shall inherit the earth, so the weaker side will win.

"We are the two-headed dirty beast that's gonna bang the devil and give him AIDS." - Brother Ed

Ant: So we got the mighty in space and the sheep inheriting the meek... what's the question again? The side that wins is the side that is closest to Jesus. Say you got the Americans and the infidels, you would have an American victory. Now if you were fighting American against American, you'd have the Pentacostals, then the Baptists, the Catholics, the Hail Bop Comet people...
RRP: The Raelians.
Ed: Jim Jones.
Ant: It is he that is closest to the Lord that wins.
RRP: And that was your hierarchy of proximity to the Lord. Who was at the top?
Ant: Your born-again pentacostals.
RRP: Alright, the Communists and the Devil: both red. Is that a coincidence?
Ed: Oohhhh, no! That is perfectly in his plan.
RRP: So was the Cold War the result of Hell freezing over?
Ant: Objection!
Ed: The jury shall ignore that question.
RRP: Fair enough. Here's one from a movie I watched as I was preparing this interview. In Wild Zero, Guitar Wolf explains that "love knows know boundaries: no nationality, no gender." Have you ever experienced such boundless love?
Ed: I would say the Lord has definitely blessed us with hot babes.
Ant: Hot dirty monkeys. Love knows no boundaries, except we can't bang anyone except for our girlfriends and wives. I ain't allowed to have a threesome, how about you? Love *does* have boundaries.
RRP: So does an unshakable faith and unyielding piety help you to score with the babes?
Ant: Oh my God, in the early days... many women have hit on Brother Ed, unbeknownst to Brother Ed.
Ed: Really? I thought you were the one who got all the girls.
Ant: I've noticed all the hitting.
Ed: You see, I'm married so my motto is: It's alright to go out and get hungry as long as you come home and eat.
Ant: Yeah, but you ate at my house the other night.
Ed: I did, didn't I?

Ant: Cocksucker. Eat at your own house. I'm the same way. I believe in chastity. Chastity by force is a good way. Brother Ben, do you feel it? Do you feel your kahunas clamped by the women of the world?
Brother Ben has his kahunas clamped!
RRP: Cupped more than clamped. So what provides you with your greatest temptation?
Ed: Women.
Ant: With one or two legs, and breasts. Ever banged an amputee?
Ed: I address the situation at live shows. I've said "look at that hot chick over there, Brother Ant, she has stuffed a chubby in my pants." Then it turns out to be Ant's girlfriend and it leads to an awkward situation.
Ant: There's a little tension there. My girlfriend's only 15, so it's very tense. [laughs] Brother Ed's hitting on my underage girlfriend. So yes, women are very tempting. That, and I'd say the temptation of drink.
RRP: I thought you said that drinking was not a sin.
Ant: It's not. It's just very tempting. We have been tempted to go to church many times, but we fought that. I was tempted to go to Walmart too.
Ed: But they'll never suck us into their evil corporation with their sales.
Ant: Their Depends are very cheap, not that I buy those. I just price them.
Ed: Temptation is good, though, because if you resist it, it makes you stronger.
Ant: That which does not kill you makes you gay.
RRP: Makes you gay? Really?
Ant: I read that in a magazine.
RRP: Are you coming out here in Rock N Roll Purgatory?
Ant: That's right. Me and Brother Ed had a threesome with Jesus. That can be the name of our new CD "Uncle Scratch Comes Out... Suckin'" Okay, scratch that. We'd like to be billed as the Self-Righteous Brothers, though. Is this good music? [techno music is playing at the bar]
Ed: I feel like getting a massage.
Ant: We think alike; we should go get happy endings somewhere. Brother Ben, have you ever had a happy ending over there in Warren by Youngstown? Hey, you need another drink? We'd like to state that Brother Ben is drinking the official beer of Al Qaeda. It's North Korean Nuclear Arms beer.
RRP: It's whatever they had cheap. You shouldn't overanalyze it. So is there anything else that needs to be said?
Ant: We're looking for someone to exploit us. We'd like to sell-out.
Ed: We are the two-headed dirty beast that's gonna bang the devil and give him AIDS. ¶

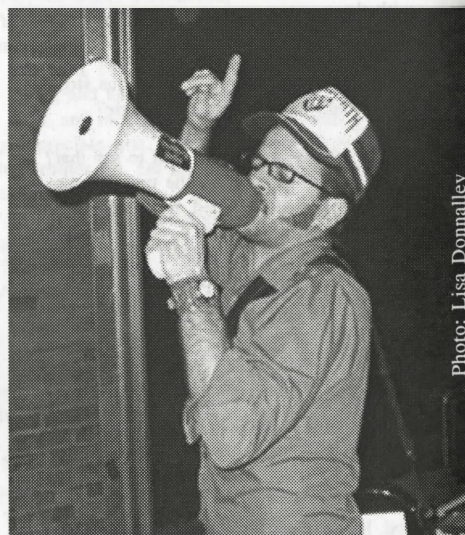


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The Way It All Must End

by Bram Riddlebarger

Your head bursting from sleep and sickness, you sit at the kitchen table and listen to Hank Williams moan from the stereo in the living room. Hank had just kicked it a week ago. His voice was more ghostly than ever.

You shake your head.

You wonder why Tom Robbins ended his books the way he does. Then you wonder why you thought Hank Williams had died just one week ago. Tom Robbins may have invaded your skull. It was possible. Telepathy or some crazy shit, you reckon. Maybe Tom Robbins is the cause of your throbbing brain. He could be up there, lurking like the ghost of Hank Williams between your ears.

You flip the station on the stereo until you find something loud. Thoughts of exorcism run through the sickness in your head. Is Robbins dancing? The throbbing, you notice, does have a slow, two-four backbeat-like pattern. Almost rockabilly, but surely this couldn't be true. Have Hank Williams and his Drifting Cowboys decided to play One Last Show, Exclusive, for One Night Only, with Tom Robbins as the entire audience, inside your head? Why you ask? Even cowboys get the blues or what?

You think you hear the old Lovesick Blues Boy crooning away from your medulla oblongata right this second. Meanwhile, you feel Tom Robbins still kicking the beat, apparently complete with cowboy boots on his feet. You turn the stereo up as loud as it will go, but to no effect. The boot stompin' rages on as Tom Robbins perfects his Texas two-step.

Through the pain that is your head; small questions begin to arise from your frontal lobes. Small neuro-electrical torpedoes firing away like hopeless sperm racing against the PILL. The bastards. Who sold that Robbins a ticket anyway? You suspect you know the answer to that question. Hank hadn't led the purest of lives and Robbins never missed a chance to bash the Almighty. Then again . . . anything was possible after this, right? Maybe old Hank's been sittin' in purgatory this whole time and now he's got to show Tom Robbins what he's got. Maybe it's his only chance. Heaven or hell, baby, which side are you on? If Tom Robbins's cowboy boots are any indication, looks like Hank might be singing with an angel band after all. Maybe God's going to kill two kooks with one banana. If Robbins can kick out a good two-step and Williams can yodel till he really does see the light, He'll let 'em both in. Meanwhile, the Old Man gets a free Hank Williams concert (everyone knows God loves country music) as well the pleasure of watching that sinner Tom Robbins stomp around in cowboy boots, skinny legs and all.

Of course, how your brain became the venue for such a visitation of the otherworldly is the part you aren't getting. Wasn't St. Peter supposed to take care of these matters? Hank Williams plays the Pearly Gates. Shit. There are probably people dying to see this show.

As you complete this thought, Tom Robbins bears down on your corpus callosum. You can't take much more. Your skull was not intended to be the Holy Ghost's honky-tonk. Or was it? You turn the stereo off and sit back down at the kitchen table; nausea grips your stomach. You're afraid that if you barf you may see a tiny fiddle bow or maybe a six-shooter swirling around in the oatmeal you ate for breakfast. You try it anyway. Hell, it might make them stop.

It doesn't. Not even a break in the action. You realize you do not matter in the course of such events. They only need your head. The fact that this is your command central for all functions mental is irrelevant to the divine jig Tom Robbins now performs around your cerebral cortex. Even Hank Williams, spinal distortion and all, shows no mercy. His cowboy boots beat a leather tattoo of two-timin' into your brain stem and you cry for mercy.

There is no such thing. You stumble away from the oatmeal stew floating like a healthy colon inside your toilet bowl and fall down on your knees. In this state of forced supplication, the Drifting Cowboys break into a frantic version of what sounds like 'Sally Goodin' but could be the voice of the Creator Himself for all you care. You hit the floor face down. Oatmeal flecked bile seeps from your mouth like snooze juice as you writhe among the ghosts of broken beer bottles and honky-tonk hardwood floorboards. Tom Robbins hoots and hollers, "DO-CE-DO!" in a trance-like state as the frenzy escalates to near quantum proportions. Hank's bringing down the house tonight. And all you can think is this must be the way it all ends, this must be the way it all ends, this must be . . . the way . . . it . . . all . . . ends.

* Bram Riddlebarger writes, plays music, and lives in Athens, Ohio. He has a degree in creative writing from Ohio University, and has put out several collections of his work. Recording as a one-man band (Bram Riddlebarger & His Lonesome Band), he simultaneously plays a kick drum suitcase, hi-hat, and electric guitar. Bram also drummed for the Dragline Bros. (ex-Redtails) for many years. All of his recordings, releases, and books to date are released on his lo-fi label Redtail Records/Productions. Bram is probably best known for forming and fronting the juke joint hillbilly band, the Wailin' Elroys (Rhythm Bomb Records), where he wrote songs, sang, and played flat top guitar.

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Toys That Kill

Interview with Todd Congelliere

I first got infected by Toys That Kill a couple years ago when Isaac from Shark Pants made me a tape with two of their albums on it. That's usually how it all begins with this affliction. Their bite latched onto me with locked jaws as their hookworm melodies invaded my fertile insides like conquistadors after my precious white blood cells. At first the symptoms were relatively mild: just slight nasal congestion accompanied by itchy dancin' feet and dizzy spells. But the disease started setting in full-force soon after that, slowly seeping into my subconscious and manifesting itself with more severe physical pathologies. The more I listened, the more symptoms I developed. I had lyrical tourette's, muscle spasms, persistent goose bumps, fatigue, fever, dementia, and premature ejaculation. The hooks were a sickness that stuck with me like a stray dog that you begin to love even after it bit you. It was like this new illness was overtaking my identity. I welcomed the virus as it spread to new parts of my body, claiming each as its own territory. I was being reborn under the sovereignty of a diseased deity. My body was a weak flower and Toys That Kill controlled the sun. The feeling was hard to describe. Sometimes there was a poppy euphoria, while other times there was this super-subtle Eastern European vibe than ran through my spinal column. Often my nervous system was jolted by these outstanding, yet absolutely venomous tunes. I have since purchased proper copies of each album and learned to deal with my illness. There is a very large global support network for those with this affliction. I was definitely not alone. We are united in our refusal to attempt recovery, preferring to bask in the warm embrace of this special infirmity. If life is sweet suffering, then you gotta choose your poison wisely. For my fellow sufferers, I was able to do an interview with Todd Congelliere (guitar/vocals) back in April 2005. - Ben Lybarger

RRP: How did you meet Shark Pants?

Todd: Well I actually met the Swing Ding Amigos first [Isaac's other band]. They set up shows for us in Tuscon and Nogales. Then Shark Pants came later. Actually, Vanessa [from Shark Pants] - well before Shark Pants started - gave me real crappy directions for the Tuscon show and we almost ended up in Nogales even though we were to play Tuscon that night. But she was way too rad to get bummed at.

RRP: Have you played anywhere else in Mexico?

Todd: Nah, but we've been invited to go to Mexico City but we just haven't really ironed it out yet.

RRP: You live in San Pedro now, right? Where are you from originally, and why did you move?

Todd: Originally I'm from Torrance, which is 5 minutes from Pedro. I moved to San Pedro 'cos I opened a record store up there in 1996 and rent was weighing down on my head, so I moved into the back of the store for awhile. I pretty much just stayed here ever since.

RRP: I've read that your former band F.Y.P. had stopped being fun for you, and that you can't relate anymore to words you said 10 years ago. Was that the only reason for quitting? What changed? What made FYP no longer any fun and how has your outlook or approach changed for Toys That Kill? What are you free to do with TTK that you felt you couldn't as FYP?

Todd: Well it really fucked us up bad when Joe died. (Joe Ciauri was our bass player and great friend who committed suicide.) It was so fun when he joined the band, and when he died the band was left in limbo and once we pieced it back together again it felt unnatural. So I really think that's when I really started thinking "I don't like playing these songs anymore." People would show up at shows and demand us to play songs we ditched so long ago just 'cos they were getting into it right then and we would be like "no" and they would get all pissy



and shit. There was just a lot of stuff that added up and deep down inside I knew that this wasn't a job, it was for fun and it was my life and I don't have to do anything anyone tells me 'cos they can't fire me or dock my pay, so why do it.

I've always felt free to write whatever kinda song I wanted, even with FYP. I got a lot of shit for it then and I still will in the future, but the difference with Toys That Kill it's more of a full band feel, which I always wanted. Sean writes songs too and with Jimmy and Chachi on the rhythm pounding, everything feels cohesive. Chemistry is tighter and tighter every extra day we play together.

RRP: You seem to have quit professional skating also when it was no longer fun. How did it get to that point? What made it something you no longer wanted to do?

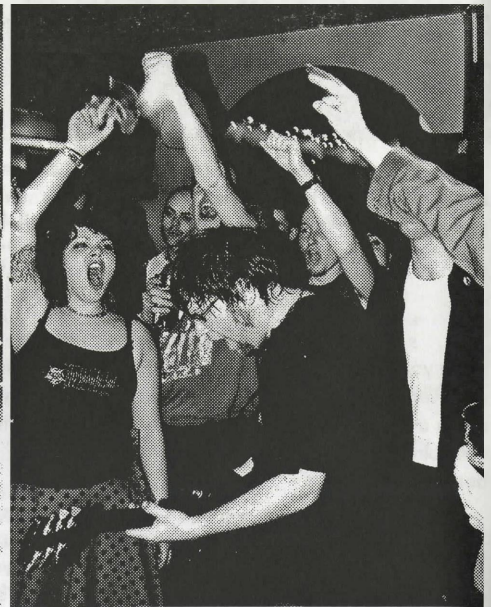
Todd: Well my family got our house taken away by the bank and that's where my ramp was. It was kinda all downhill since then 'cos I didn't really love street skating like I loved vert. The straw that broke the back was when I got sent to Europe to do a big contest and some demos, and pretty much ditched it all and just went around aimlessly like a chicken without a head. Right when I got back people were angry, I didn't care and then I quit. No big deal... except when I see all my friends that are millionaires right now!

RRP: You've said before that you never envisioned yourself as a musician, that they actually annoyed you. How come?

Todd: They kinda still do but I can't breathe without it. I dunno, I always hated the wanking solo, curly-haired Guitar Center fucko. I guess I became what I hate, but I love it.

RRP: Did you really have to sell your car to pay for the recording of a TTK album? What other kinds of sacrifices have you made for the band?

Todd: Yea my '68 VW Fastback! I loved that car. I remember the day I got it I took my girlfriend at the time, Julie and Joe Stoots for a ride and it was like a fucking carpet ride. The good thing is I sold it to this older lady who was really into it and my mom says she still sees her driving around and she kept the FYP and Dwarves stickers on it! Ha! I don't have a car now but fuck it, I like our record better than having a car.



RRP: What made you decide to start a label, and has driven you to keep it going since 1989?

Todd: I never really decided to start a label, it kinda just happened. I put out the first FYP 7" 'cos I was sick of dubbing tapes and I really really wanted to have a piece of vinyl I could show people that I made years later, even if it meant they would hafta sit on my furniture made out of the boxes of unsold records. Worked out a little better for me, I guess. I mean, I can tell you how I will feel later, but right now and for the last 16 years I've been wanting to do this for the rest of my life. The only virus that could stop that, I guess, is money, and I got into a horrible \$30,000 debt a few years back and I somehow managed to crawl outta that with my balls attached. So if that could happen I feel pretty happy to know I might keep this going for awhile. I'm still always broke, though.

RRP: What qualities do you look for in a band for your label? How do you handle it when friends of yours, or just good people in general, try to get you to release their CD but you aren't into it?

Todd: I just have to love 'em. Personally and their music. Ya know, I hate dealing with dickheads who just wanna be the next hip thing. Fortunately, Recess isn't too hip so the hipsters can steer clear. Well, sometimes if a friend asks me to put something out I don't like, I tell them it's not my thing. Sometimes were not friends anymore, or they say something shitty about my band. It's tough but it goes with the territory. Sometimes I tell 'em that the labels going outta business and I'm moving to Arkansas.

RRP: Speaking of labels, why does Fat Mike's wife not like you?

Todd: Well I dunno if she doesn't like me still, but awhile back when Propagandhi came to LA, I think it was some Fat tour, they invited me back to this crazy hotel where Fat was having an after-party. Me and my friends show up and were pretty much the sore thumb of the whole thing. It was just people giving us the sore thumb look the whole time, so we just drank beers and flowered the walls. Somehow we ended up in her room 'cos Chris & Jord (Propagandhi) and some others were in there and thought maybe we'd be more comfortable in there. Not true. So me and my

BASEBALL FURIES



The first time I heard the Baseball Furies a few years ago, I had the wind completely knocked out of me. I received their "Greater Than Ever" CD from Big Neck Records, and it sounded like a savage beating in an alley by someone whose displaced anger found me through drunken opportunity. The music was searing rock'n'roll weaponized with garage punk engineering and delivered with a fatalistic disregard for safety of any sort. The lyrics come off with an urgent sort of poetry that makes them all the more striking, unsettling, and enduring. The band seems to be faithfully transcribing the dark and pulsing id that lies underneath everyone's publicly restrained exterior, while musically and lyrically retaining the smallest possible measure of control in order to retain its surging vitality. It is ruthless, primal, and immediate. It is fantastic.

I was able to do the following interview with A-ron "Styles" Orlowski (guitar) in May 2005. - Ben Lybarger

RRP: You took your name from the 1979 gang movie "The Warriors," right? Who were the Baseball Furies in that film, and why did you choose that name?

A-ron: Yeah, the Furies were the gang that dressed in Yankee-like uniforms with grease paint on their faces similar to Kiss. The name was chosen before the band was formed when Odie [vocals] and Aaron (Blowtops guitarist) were sitting around drinking one night and Aaron convinced Odie to start a new band.

RRP: Didn't you used to wear those baseball uniforms with painted faces and bats? Why did you stop doing that?

A-ron: The band did do that for a little while (their first few shows) that they played with the original drummer (on the first 7"), Chris Volois. He left to move to Florida and became a lawyer before I joined the band. Once I joined, we recruited Dapper on drums and the uniforms were ditched. Hollywood [bass] said that the uniforms never matched and his especially

was too small (showing embarrassing bulges). The grease paint was even worse because if you touched your face at all, it wound up all over your guitar or anything else you touched. We do talk about doing it as a surprise some time at random.

RRP: Why did you move from Buffalo to Chicago? Is that where the whole band is based now? How does the music scene differ between those regions?

A-ron: We moved to Chicago because one band member's girlfriend moved here for work and he announced that he was going to move with her. Odie and I were kind of sick of Buffalo and said we'd move too. Dapper stayed behind and continued working as a nurse and got married. We got Matt Williams [drums] from the Guilty Pleasures and have been here three years now.

The music scene in Chicago is a lot different from Buffalo. First off, it's a much bigger city and there are different scenes here that are not only divided by genre but also geographically. It's strange to us since in Buffalo, if you were in a band in the city you pretty much knew of most everyone else in any type of band. Here there are bands that we have no idea exist that live in the same city as us. It's kind of cool to discover bands completely out of the blue, but it's also hard because there is so much going on just with the people we know that there is little time or money to check out things that you just catch wind of. We did recently play a show with a southside hardcore band called I Attack in our neighborhood and are looking forward to playing with them on the southside. It is easier to set up a show here because there are way more people into doing that. In the Ruff Buff it was always someone from the Furies or the Blowtops setting up shows. Especially for out of town bands. It was also a lot harder to get bands to come to Buffalo, although we proved it could be done with things like the Rust Belt Revolts. I mean you had to have a pretty good time to drive to Buffalo for nothing but free beer and a place to sleep for two nights and it sure was.

RRP: The song "Sweat-out" seems to be about a

retribution fantasy against the police. What kind of run-ins have you had with the cops that may have inspired that song? Didn't you guys get arrested in California in 1999?

A-ron: Odie writes the lyrics to the songs so I can't really speak for him. Everyone that has been in the band has been arrested, except for Hollywood, for things ranging from criminal possession of stolen property to stealing cable. We've never been arrested as a band, but the reason we missed some shows on our tour in 1999 was that we started breaking down constantly once we hit California. I've been asked this before and don't know where that rumor started.

RRP: What secret clubs do you hate?

A-ron: All of them!

RRP: Almost every review of you guys mentions the words "hate," "venom," "spite," aggression,

"anger," or another similar descriptor. What sorts of things are driving your fury? What is pissing you off?

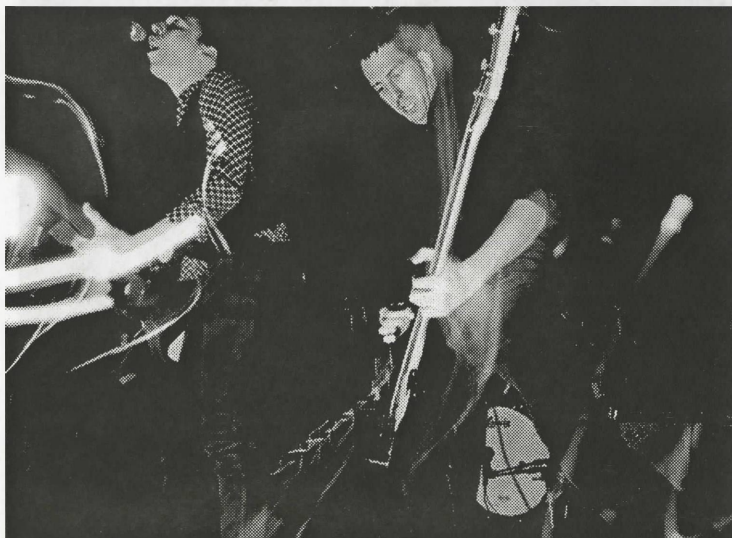
A-ron: Everyday things piss us off. Shitty jobs, bills, girls, name it. I guess this comes across in our music because it's a way to get away from these things by playing as hard as we can.

RRP: What drives your lyrical sensibility? Do you guys vent through other mediums as well?

A-ron: Again, a question for Odie, but he's too lazy to write a response. He does spend time writing the lyrics. We both went through a Bukowski phase and have always enjoyed books like *Last Exit To Brooklyn* and things along those lines. He definitely writes with a feeling similar to those writers. As far as other things we're into, both Hollywood and Odie are into art. I skate when I'm not injured and we all are a bunch of drunks.

RRP: In an interview with Odyssey Zine, Jared of the Ponys was asked what was the worst live situation that he could imagine, and he said, "the worst thing would be pooping my pants like Aaron from the Baseball Furies did at SXSW last year." What's the story behind that?

A-ron: Well, we were down there for a few days



hanging out with friends and playing shows and drinking all day and night. So we have an afternoon show at Beerland and we get there about 11 in the morning and start drinking. I think we were to play at three or something. So anyway, the bar has these crock pots with a sign that says "Free Frito Pie." So I'm hungry and the price is right but I had no idea what this dish was. The bartender opens a bag of fritos and proceeds to dump this vegetarian chili into the bag from the crock pots on the bar. Add a little cheese and a bunch of jalapenos and it's a meal. So I ate a couple of these "pies" and drank a lot more and felt fine. So we take the stage and the first song starts with ring notes that you do windmills to right at the beginning. So I hit the first chord with a mighty windmill and sprayed a bunch of wet shit out of my asshole into my pants. So we play the rest of our set and I'm trying to move around, but this is a very uncomfortable situation for any kind of movement. The worst part was the crowd wouldn't let us leave so we played three more songs after we had finished our set. After each of these songs, I'm pleading with the guys to end the show, but Hollywood just keeps yelling songs out and we go right into them. So after the third song, I unplug the guitar and run to the bathroom, ending the show. After cleaning myself up, they are giving me a bunch of shit about being a pussy for being tired and not wanting to play extra songs. That's when I finally told them that I had shit myself during the first song we played. They laid off me after they heard my explanation.

RRP: What can you tell me about The Sanctuary in Buffalo? Was that a place where you used to play a lot? What was it like there and why did it get shut down?

A-ron: The Sanctuary was run by Bart who went on to start Big Neck Records. We played there a bunch. He would promise out of town bands \$75, free drinks, and a place to stay, which was Odie and my

house or Aaron's (Blowtops) house. It was tiny: maybe 40 people could fit upstairs where the bands would play. We all would drink every night there. Sometimes I'd run around naked and check ID's at the door. It was a place where we could do pretty much whatever we wanted. The city ended up shutting him down, ran him out of town and he moved to Virginia. Now it's a shitty yuppie cigar/martini bar.

RRP: What do you guys do for work when not with the band? Is it difficult to get time off to tour?

A-ron: Hollywood works at a bar called Delilah's, strangely enough owned by a guy from Buffalo. Odie bartends at a restaurant, Billiams works at the Empty Bottle, and I work at a museum. It's kind of tough for me to get time off, but they're pretty understanding. We're going to Europe for 5 weeks starting in April so they gave me extra time off on top of using my vacation days, so that was cool. Also with Hollywood in the Tyrades, we have to schedule tours around both bands.

RRP: How is the new CD "Let It Be" different from "Greater Than Ever?" In what direction have you gone musically and lyrically, and what can people expect from it?

A-ron: I don't know. It's a little moodier, darker. I think it's just as intense, just better songwriting maybe. A while back, I listened to all of our records chronologically and it seems like a natural progression. This band has never been dedicated to a "sound," we just write whatever we feel like and see if it can work with the whole band playing together. As we're exposed to more and more music, that just subconsciously gets thrown into the mix when writing and arranging a song. We like to incorporate sounds we all like into our band. This record was written four years ago, at that time we were listening to a lot of Wipers, Testors, Gun Club, Birthday Party, Stiff Little Fingers, sixties garage, blues, noise... I guess just a ton of stuff. So I can pick out parts of our stuff that's influenced me to write, but it's funny to hear others say that a song really sounds like one band and

that is totally off from what I was going for but still makes sense. It's just that we as a unit have a unique sound that seems to come out naturally. If people like it, that's cool, if not, Fuck 'em cause we like it.

RRP: How would you describe the typical Baseball Furies fan? What kinds of people do you draw?

A-ron: That would be for them to describe. I don't know if we have any fans. Most people who like our music that we meet become friends. Just people who like good music and having a good time and don't really care for gimmicks or bullshit.

RRP: What are some of your most memorable shows or touring experiences?

A-ron: Well, obviously, shitting my pants. Memorable shows would be with the Dirty's and Splash 4 at the Gold Dollar in Detroit. Playing to three people at Rudyards in Houston in '99, but selling more merch than the night before. Any South by Southwest cause so many friends are down there at once. Both tours with the Mistreaters. The West Coast tour with the TV Killers and the Stitches. Basically meeting new friends and seeing old ones are the best memories.

RRP: If you were in control of shit in this country, what things would you change?

A-ron: Well, I don't like the way shit smells so I'd have scientists come up with a way to make shit smell better. But I'd rather control other things than shit. I conferred with Hollywood about this and he said that shit should be blue, not brown. So maybe it should smell like blueberry muffins.

RRP: What is your most prized possession, and what would you do to somebody who stole or damaged it?

A-ron: Property is theft.

RRP: If you could pass along one bit of information or advice to the next generation, what would it be?

A-ron: Don't listen to anything we say.

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Bloodshot Bill



When done right, the one-man band builds upon the foundations layed by West Virginia pioneer Hasil Adkins, but doesn't merely imitate him. The one-man band format lends itself to individuality, to a pared down and rudimentary creativity that connects with the listener on the most primal and personal level. Bloodshot Bill is case and point. Although he is from Canada, I associate him more closely with the syrupy humidity of North Carolina where I first saw him bash out some of the most rollicking hillbilly racket these ears have ever had the pleasure to be damaged by. Later, when I would spin songs from his CD "Rockabilly Trash" while DJing, people would always ask who that was they just heard howling and growling from some backwoods beyond. His music quickly grabs you like a groper in the backseat making his move. It is pure libidinous smarm all gunked up, tarred and Charlie Feathered. The following is the "lost" interview I did with him back in January 2005. - Ben



RRP: So, how did you lose your driver's license for one year?

BSB: Well, I'll tell you 'bout that whole weekend. It all started in New York. I was playin' CBGB's on a Friday. About a half hour before I was supposed to play, I went out to the car for something... turns out somebody had smashed the lock off the door and stolen my guitar and all my clothes. Not fun. Luckily I had most of my gear inside the bar. So, here I am: car won't lock and I gotta go play now. So, I park it in a lot for the night, played my show and didn't bother with the cops (what would they actually do?), slept for about an hour, walked to the police station (figured I'd report it, for insurance), found the car, went back to the station, then hit the road headed for Detroit... got there late with no time to rest, partied and played and partied, decided to drive outta D-town into Canada (safer to park when your door doesn't lock, it's true). So, finally I went to sleep (in the car) at some gas station around 6AM. About 9AM I get up and head out to my next gig (a trailer park in Ontario), play it, then head out for drinks with friends. Realize I'm startin' to get a lil tipsy, and I figure I should cab home, right? But wait. Can't leave my car parked on the road with all my gear in it 'cause the door won't lock. So, somebody mentions that they live three blocks away and I can park there. They're on a bike and will meet me at the corner to show me what house it is. Well, as I am slowin' down to find them, that's when the cop stops me ('cause I was slowin' down!). Anyhoo, I fail the breathalyzer, get taken in, and the car is towed. They said I was the only DUI they've ever had on a Sunday, which I thought was kinda funny. When the cop was filling out my description in the report, under "hair" he wrote: "black and greasy!" Too cool, eh? So far I lost my license for 3 months automatically for this, but it was gonna go to court... 3 months? Shit, I gotta start a tour in 2 weeks!! I knew I wasn't gonna cancel my tour, so I started a contest ("go on tour with Bloodshot Bill") and found some folks to go with me. Our first day on the tour we all went to court together! It was nuts. Judge was cool, but he still gave me the minimum sentence - 1 year suspended license and a \$690 fine... ugghh. I get it back in September 2005.

RRP: I remember reading something a while back about your car getting stolen with your merch inside. What is the story behind that?

BSB: Yeah, that was in Halifax (a city in eastern Canada, known as being real friendly. It was our first tour over there - me & the Hubcaps). Shows were goin' good, then one night we all got really drunk. The club said we could leave our car in the back over night, so we said "sure" and took off. Nothing was visible, everything was in the trunk. Next day, we get there: no car. Some clothes scattered around, but

that's it. I didn't even have a shirt, just my leather. We got to watch it all on the club's "surveillance" cam. Funny thing is, there is a police station right next door to the club! The club was cool and put us up in a hotel and Travis from the Sadies let me borrow his guitar to play. I didn't have any clothes, so I played in the bathrobe from the hotel. Cops found the car totally burned to the ground (I don't mean worn out, I mean literally burned to the ground!). I didn't have insurance either, for anything: fire, theft, etc. Ooh, that sucked.

RRP: How come you are doing the one-man band now instead of playing with the Hubcaps? What or who inspired you to go it alone?

BSB: Well, I started out playin' as a solo thing, no drums, just foot stompin', so it's not like I was like "I'm going solo now!" I like doin' whatever I wanna do, and it's a lot easier too when all you gotta do is make up your mind and do it, don't have to wait for everyone's schedules to be the same. I played with the Hubcaps for about 2 years while doing other things too. We're still buddies, I'm just doin' the OMB thing more now.

RRP: I have read that you also played with a band called the Guilloteens. What was the band like and why did it cease to be?

BSB: Guilloteens were cool: a little more traditional sounding with upright bass, snare, acoustic, electric guitars. We played local shows for less than a year together, then I went on a "solo" tour, came back, and everyone was doin' something else. We're still all buddies.

RRP: Being from Montreal and having toured in the U.S. many times, what kind of trouble have you run into when crossing the border?

BSB: Knock on wood, I've never been turned away. Well, once, but I wasn't crossin' to play, so it don't count. Dude wanted proof that I live and work in Canada, but he was just bein' a jerk. One time, after 9/11, me and the Hubcaps were crossin' and our drummer, Dom, didn't bring any I.D. Nothing. Not even his license, and he was the one drivin'! But we ended up getting outta there on charm, I figure.

RRP: What have been your favorite cities in the U.S., and how do the shows, people, and music scenes seem different from Canada?

BSB: Well, I'm really down with weekenders. Ya get more time to hang out with people and stuff. My favorites so far are the Heavy Rebel Weekender (Winston-Salem, NC), Elvisfest (Chapel Hill, NC), and Greaserama (Kansas City, MO). But as along as folks are cool and the food is good, I'm havin' a good time. Differences? Guess that would depend on the town. There ain't no weekenders in Canada (well, no

good ones... yet), but it's all pretty similar no matter where ya go. Most folks just wanna have a good time.

RRP: What have been the highlights and lowlights from your tours? Any interesting people, strange occurrences, or tales of complete rock-n-roll abandon?

BSB: I'll list a bunch and you decide High or Low!

- Losing car keys and having to sleep in a haunted opera house (no shit!)
- Getting car stolen with all the gear inside.
- Finding the car totally burned to the ground.
- Getting the car broken into (again), and losin' another guitar and all my clothes.
- Sleeping in a Murder Room (This is a wild story! There was still blood on the walls)
- Sleeping on dog shit and cat piss (that counts as a High, as I don't usually sleep much).
- Meetin' cool people from all over the place.
- Gettin' stuck outside all night, alone, in the winter, then meetin' up with everyone the next afternoon to find out that the van's been towed!
- Hearing from folks who want me to come back to their town and play.

RRP: So what is the "Murder Room" story?

BSB: Ha!...The murder room story! Well, here goes... I was on tour in June 2003 in Western Canada. We arrived in Winnipeg at the "Royal Albert" (Fancy name but it's a total dive; one of those venues that is half bar, half hotel, and all the regulars live there 'cause it's dirt cheap), and they always give out-of-town bands a room. Anyhoo, front page news on the day we show up is "Body Decapitated at the Royal Albert!" Turns out a couple nights before, two dudes were in a room and got into a fight. One of them was decapitated, dismembered, and disemboweled! They had to take the body parts out in a coffin, it was such a mess! It happened in room #309 (as in "Phantom 309"! At this time there was a big Hollywood movie ("Shall We Dance") being filmed in town with Jennifer Lopez, Susan Sarandon, & Richard Gere. Turns out some jewelry was stolen from the set (I figured it would just be costume jewelry, but the newspaper said it was worth a lot of \$\$). Anyhoo, guess where the jewelry turns up? Yep, with all the body parts!! Damn! What?! That was weird enough, but then I ended up passin' through Winnipeg three months later to play at the "Albert" again. We show up, they give me my room key, and it's room #309 - the Murder Room! Well, I guess they forgot that I was there when this all happened, but I was pretty stoked about it. So, I headed up to the room, and they had painted the walls really, really light green, which was really dumb 'cause you could still see lines of blood dripping down the wall! Fucked up. I hung my bolo ties with horse shoes on 'em for good luck! I took a bath there (you can't pass up a chance to get clean on the road) and later I found out that's where they found most of the body parts... in the bathtub! Too

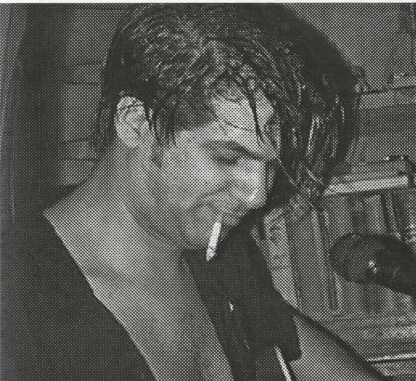
much, eh?

RRP: Do you count Roger Miller as a big influence? Has anyone ever told you that on your more subdued numbers, your voice is uncannily like his?

BSB: Wow, nope, never heard that, but I love Roger Miller. Used to listen to him lots in the car while on the road. Good drivin' music! I guess it just sunk in me?

RRP: I know you just got back from Elvisfest in North Carolina. How was that experience and the 50-hour bus ride home?

BSB: Elvisfest ruled! I had the best damned time! People were so cool and all the bands rocked. Each band has to play at least two songs by the King. "Little Sister" was a popular one this year, but it didn't matter 'cause each band has their own style, ya know. I played both nights and had a total blast each time, soaked in beer... cheap beer. Dave Quick knows how to throw a party.



I'm really looking forward to Heavy Rebel Weekend. Yeah, the bus ride sucked (I was on the damned thing for 50 hours total, with about 3 hours sleep!), but I would do it again right now, I swear!

RRP: What was your New Year's celebration like? Is it also your Birthday?

BSB: Yep, New Year's was fun. Played in New York with Reverend Beatman at a lil' Tiki Bar. It was my birthday too and they put me on last around 2:00am. Well, they kept the bar open way late that night, and I ended up playin' for about 2 hours straight! I was totally soaked by the end!

RRP: Are you heading to Europe this year? Whereabouts are you going?

BSB: Yep, I'm headin' there early February. Goin' to Holland, Germany, Norway, France... not sure where else. I booked the first half and a dame from France is takin' care of the rest.... who knows?

RRP: What is your life like when not on the road or playing a show? What sorts of things are you into?

BSB: Well, after being in bars every night for however long, I like to just hang out and lay low till I head out again. I stay home, listen to records, get drunk alone, play music, watch movies. I only go out to see shows and play 'em.

RRP: What is the typical Bloodshot Bill performance like, and what have been the best and worst crowd reactions to what you do?

BSB: Well, the later and longer we get to play, the better! Typical show? Well, it gets real sweaty! Worst crowds are the ones who are too cool to move. Best ones are the ones where everybody's shakin' and dancin' all around me on stage, with drinks 'n' clothes flyin' everywhere!



RRP: What are your pet peeves?

BSB: Not having a license, Crossing the Border, Getting stuff stolen, Guys who hit on other guy's gals, People who are just fuggin' lame.

RRP: What do you desire most?

BSB: Uh, I dunno... back rubs? Full body massages? Room service?

RRP: So how do you want to be remembered in the history of rock-n-roll?

BSB: As a guy who played good rockin' music.

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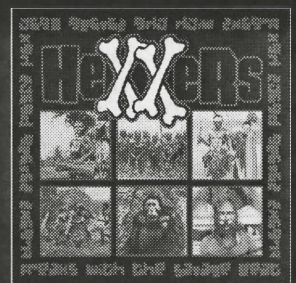


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POOR WHITE TRASH ON MOONSHINE MOUNTAIN

HICKS PLOITATION IOI

BY BOB IGNIZIO

Hicks and hillbillies, rednecks and crackers, moonshiners and poor white trash (and don't forget them "kissin' cousins"). That's what you'll find in the kind of movies this article covers. No stereotype is too broad, no cliché too well worn, and no gag too tasteless. So put on some denim overalls, grab your shotgun, and pass the white lightnin'. We're diving in to the wonderful world of hicksploitation!

POOR WHITE TRASH ON THE BAYOU

'**Poor White Trash**' (1961), originally released by United Artists in 1957 under the more appropriate title '**Legend of the Bayou**', is about an architect (Peter Graves) who goes down to Cajun country looking to score a building contract. Instead, he scores Cajun beauty Marie (Lita Milan) and a whole mess of trouble from Greek nutjob Ulysses (Timothy Carey). The movie is directed and shot nicely, and the director even tries to get artsy with some double exposure montage sequences.

But whatever merits it may have had, '**Legend of the Bayou**' was a flop until exploitation distributor M.A. Ripps got the rights to the film. He added a new framing sequence featuring a hillbilly strumming a banjo and singing a song about "poor white trash" that had absolutely nothing to do with the movie. That didn't matter. When Ripps re-released the film as '**Poor White Trash**' in 1961, he used a lurid ad campaign that included "armed police keeping unescorted children out of the theaters." After that, '**Poor White Trash**' became a huge hit.

The only real hicksploitation in '**Poor White Trash**' was its marketing. One banjo playin' Tom Sawyer wannabe who isn't even part of the story doesn't quite live up to the promise of the title. Of course, as producer David F. Friedman has said, exploitation movies are all about selling "the sizzle, not the steak."² Speaking of Friedman, along with his then partner, director Herschel Gordon Lewis, he was about to offer his own decidedly bloody take on hicksploitation. It would be called '**2000 Maniacs**'.

MOONSHINE MANIACS:

THE HICKS PLOITATION FILMS OF H.G. LEWIS

'**2000 Maniacs**' (1964) is the '**Citizen Kane**' of resurrected victims of a civil war era massacre who get to kill them some Yankees movies. This was Lewis and Friedman's second gore movie, after '**Blood Feast**' (1963). The success of '**Blood Feast**' enabled them to secure a larger budget for '**2000 Maniacs**'. And just for the hell of it, Lewis and Friedman decided to actually try to make a good movie, by exploitation film standards, anyway. Hot damn if they didn't pull it off. The script is clever and genuinely funny, several performances are memorable, and the gory set pieces deliver the goods. While in its day it did less business than '**Blood Feast**', '**2000 Maniacs**' is now generally viewed as the best movie H.G. Lewis ever made, and boasts a dedicated cult following that knows every word to the Lewis-penned (and sung) theme song.

The same year '**2000 Maniacs**' came out, Lewis had another hicksploitation film in release, minus the

horror slant. '**Moonshine Mountain**' (1964) finds folk singer Doug Martin (Chuck Scott aka Charles Glore) heading to a little town in the rural hills to get in touch with the common people, find inspiration, and probably steal some songs. Martin winds up staying with a family of singing moonshiners and eventually falls for one of the womenfolk. Along the way we get plenty of music, a few rapes and murders, and copious consumption of white lightnin'.

'**Moonshine Mountain**' is nowhere near as good as '**2000 Maniacs**', but it's not without its charms. Lewis clearly has a love for "hillbilly" music, and the musical segments are quite enjoyable if you share his taste for the style. Lewis once again assembles a better than average (by his standards, at least) cast of performers, and while the plot is pretty thin, the movie is reasonably entertaining. The southern stereotypes and the casual way in which rape is dealt with might seem shocking to today's audiences, but this was par for the course in sixties drive-in movies. Lewis would revisit the hillbilly theme in other films, notably '**This Stuff'll Kill Ya**' (1971) and '**Year of the Yahoo**' (1972). However, '**2000 Maniacs**' and '**Moonshine Mountain**' remain his masterpieces in the hicksploitation genre.

LAS VEGAS HILLBILLIES IN A HAUNTED HOUSE

Not all hicksploitation movies were lurid and sleazy, though. Ferlin Husky made a few movies that were sort of the country and western equivalent of Frankie and Annette 'Beach Party' flicks. The first of these was '**Las Vegas Hillbillies**' (1966). It boasts a cast that includes both Mamie Van Doren and Jayne Mansfield, so fans of classic blond bombshells should definitely check this out. The plot is that Woody (Husky) inherits a Las Vegas bar from a disreputable relative. He decides to turn the place into a country-western juke joint. No one expects this to be successful, but hey, this is the movies so what do you think happens?

'**Las Vegas Hillbillies**' was followed by '**Hillbillies in a Haunted House**' (1967). Mamie and Jayne didn't return for the sequel, so Joi Lansing was brought in to provide the (fairly tame) sex appeal. But as a consolation prize we get classic horror icons John Carradine, Lon Chaney Jr., and Basil Rathbone. Lon Chaney in particular gives the material more than it deserves with his performance, but this is such hokey stuff nothing could save it. If you've ever seen any movie or television episode where characters are in a supposedly haunted house that is really being used as a front for some sort of criminal activity, you've seen this movie. That didn't stop me from having a good time watching it, mind you. Still, probably the one aspect of this movie that would be of most interest today is that it features a couple songs performed by a young Merle Haggard.

SOUTHERN-FRIED SOFTCORE

I don't think any article on Hicksploitation can ignore the impact of '**Hee Haw**'. This television

series premiered in 1969 starring Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Grandpa Jones, Minnie Pearl, Junior Samples, and many others. The show was a mix of great country music, bad comedy, and sexy country girls. Among the cornfed pulchritude featured on the program were Barbi Benton and Misty Rowe, both of whom posed for Playboy. While the girls kept their clothes on for '**Hee Haw**', their costumes still managed to display the attributes that brought them to Mr. Hefner's attention quite well. In addition to the sex appeal, '**Hee Haw**' also featured numerous jokes and songs about moonshine, and it had fun with hillbilly stereotypes. It was essentially '**Laugh-In**' for the country music crowd.

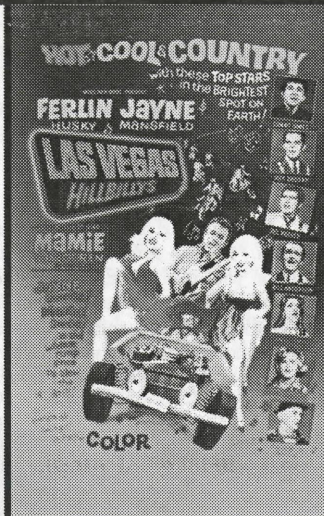
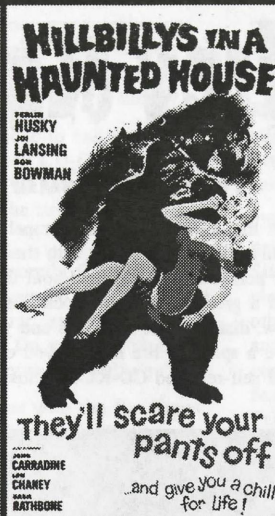
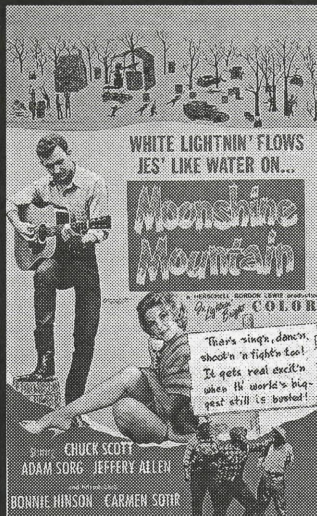
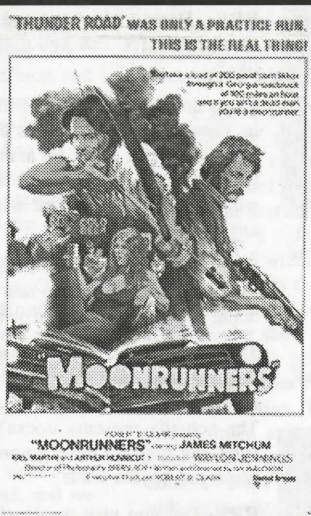
No doubt inspired by the girls on '**Hee-Haw**', in 1970 producer Harry Novak embarked on a series of hillbilly sex romps starting with '**Country Cuzzins**' and '**Country Hooker**'. Novak continued to milk this cash cow for some time, resulting in such memorable titles (if not films) as '**Midnight Plowboy**', '**Tobacco Roody**', '**Southern Comforts**', and '**Sassy Sue**'. The trailer for almost every one of these films includes some cheap variation on the gag, "it's coming soon, you will too." Novak finally squeezed the last few drops out of the udder in 1973 with '**The Pigkeeper's Daughter**'.

The plot is pretty much the same for all these films; a bunch of horny country folk gettin' it on, with humorous depictions of incest, bestiality, and rape as the order of the day. In 1972's '**Sassy Sue**', the plot concerns the efforts of Pa' to get Junior interested in women. But, as the theme song merrily informs us, "Junior's in love with Sassy Sue." Sassy Sue being a cow, of course. And yes, we do get a couple of scenes of a (thankfully) clothed Junior pretending to make love to his bovine sweetheart. You couldn't sink much lower than that, so after the following year's '**The Pigkeeper's Daughter**', Novak found new territory to exploit.

It should also be noted that Russ Meyer, arguably the best filmmaker to work in the exploitation field, set a number of his films in rural locales. Meyer scored hits with titles like '**Wild Gals of the Naked West**' (1962), '**Lorna**' (1964), '**Mudhoney**' (1965), and '**Common Law Cabin**' (1967). All are damn fine pieces of entertainment boasting great production values, gorgeous cinematography, and lots of well endowed women, but they don't really play up the hillbilly shtick.

VIOLENT REDNECKS

Hicksploitation also crossed over into the violent action/revenge and brutal horror genres popular in the seventies, with the most mainstream example being '**Deliverance**' (1972). Who can forget that weird looking kid playing "Dueling Banjos"? Who can forget Ned Beatty getting cornholed? And who can forget Burt Reynolds actually turning in a good performance? Even most people who've never seen this movie know the "squeal like a piggy" line. '**Deliverance**' is a genuinely good movie, and I doubt many people would think of it as an exploitation film. Still, it does play on hillbilly stereotypes and the appetite of viewers for violence. Sounds like exploitation to me.



1973 saw the release of 'Walking Tall'. 'Walking Tall' was based on the true story of Buford T. Pusser, an ex-wrestler turned crime fighter who gave new meaning to Teddy Roosevelt's quote about speaking softly and carrying a big stick. In the movie, Joe Don Baker's Pusser knocks the crap out of bad guys with a two by four and eventually gets elected Sheriff for his efforts, though not without a substantial cost. The film is chock full of political incorrectness and brutality, but Baker's performance is still somehow endearing. 'Walking Tall' is nowhere near the same level of quality as 'Dellverance', but as far as violent seventies action flicks go it's pretty damn good.

And of course, we can't forget the legendary 'Texas Chain Saw Massacre' (1974). Although the real life murder case this was based on took place in Wisconsin, 'Chain Saw' makes the most of relocating the events down south. It also turns one mild mannered, almost sympathetic killer into a whole family of cannibalistic, grave-robbing psychos. On one level, this is an extremely brutal and mean spirited film. However, director Tobe Hooper also includes a great deal of intentional social satire. On top of that, this movie boasts some of the most memorable shots ever in a horror film. If you haven't seen this movie, you're not a real horror fan. More hick horror films appeared in the wake of 'Chain Saw', including notably Wes Craven's 'The Hills Have Eyes' (1977). But by that time the hicksploitation genre was already transforming itself once again.

REDNECKS ON THE ROAD

There were movies about rednecks running from the police before 'Smokey and the Bandit' (1977). In fact, it was probably the success of the Roger Corman produced 'Eat My Dust' (1976, starring Ron Howard) that led to 'Smokey' getting made. But for most people, Burt Reynolds' portrayal of the wisecracking, beer running, fast driving hillbilly antihero made the biggest impression. And really, it's only the performance in this film that holds it together. In addition to Reynolds the movie's cast also boasts Jerry Reed, Paul Williams, Sally Field, and Jackie Gleason. Without their on screen charisma, this is just a rather poorly written story about a guy trying to smuggle a truckload of Coors beer across state lines while an obsessed Sheriff chases after him. Lots of cars go flying through the air (with no one ever getting hurt, of course) and...well, that's about it.

And that's about it for hicksploitation, too. 'Smokey' spawned two direct sequels and a few rip-offs, but nothing that really made an impact. By the eighties the drive-ins, which were always the main market for exploitation films of any sort, were starting to disappear. The few that remained switched to showing mainstream Hollywood films.

On TV, 'The Dukes of Hazzard' (itself based on a largely forgotten seventies hicksploitation movie called 'The Moonrunners' (1974)) kept the hicksploitation spirit alive, albeit in a much tamer form. And of course, there's Jeff Foxworthy and the rest of the "Blue Collar Comedy" gang. There have even been remakes of a few hicksploitation classics like 'Walking Tall', 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre', and 'The Hills Have Eyes'. But for the most part, the hicksploitation genre has largely faded away.

Is the passing of hicksploitation movies really anything to mourn? Probably not. Still, I say check out some of these artifacts from an age before political correctness. Some are good, some are bad, but they're all interesting for what they say about the culture in which they were created. And on top of that, they're still fun to watch, even if you might feel a little guilty about it later.

Note: By no means does this article mention every single movie that would fit under the "hicksploitation" heading. The mid to late seventies especially were rife with movies following more or less the same formula as 'Smokey and the Bandit'. Some of these movies came before 'Smokey', some after. 'Smokey and the Bandit' just happened to be the most successful. There are also probably countless

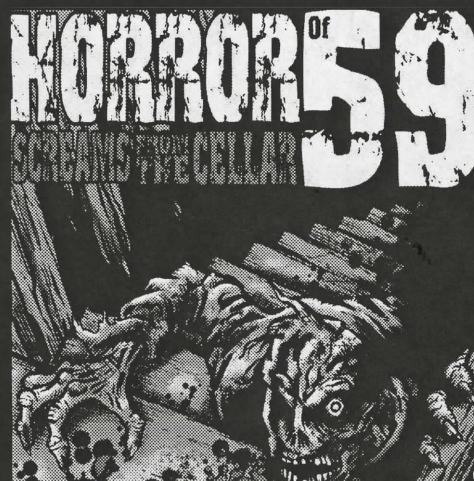
sexploitation movies, both softcore and hardcore, that plowed fields similar to those tilled by Harry Novak's flicks, and you can find a great article on more music-oriented films by Michael Weldon of 'Psychotronic Video Magazine' fame at www.wfmu.org/LCD/24/hollybilly.html.

If you're having trouble finding some of these movies, you can find a few rarities for rent on Netflix. For some titles, though, you're just going to have to buy them. Something Weird Video in particular produces high quality DVDs with many of the titles discussed here, usually as double features packed with bonus material. They're on the web at www.somethingweird.com. You can find many if not all Something Weird titles on Amazon.com and at some larger video retailers. Another excellent source for really hard to find titles (you won't find these on Amazon.com) is Shocking Video. They offer DVD-Rs of several hicksploitation movies at: www.revengeismydestiny.com/Hicksploitation.html.

ENDNOTES

¹ 'The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film', Michael J. Weldon 1983

² 'A Youth in Babylon', David F. Friedman 1990



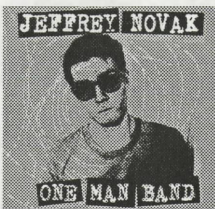
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Jeffrey Novak

Teenage Psycho



I said it before: a big part of what makes the one-man band so compelling is the directness and purity of expression. It's one person limited to only what they can do with their own arms, legs, and throat. You succeed and fail on your own merit, and it's your personality, tastes, and soul that has to burn through. In the case of Jeffrey Novak, success takes the form of a great trashy punk rock reminiscent of the Persuaders and Reatards. The sound he makes is explosive and raw, distilling the anxieties and yearnings of youth into a sonic barrage that, no matter your age, if you still have a spark of life in you, you can relate to it. With a host of sold-out 7"s, a sold-out full-length LP, and several self-released CD-Rs, his music may be hard to track down, but it's well worth the effort. - Ben



Photo by Ezra Haidet

RRP- Having grown up and still currently living in Henderson, TN, can you explain what that town is like?

JN- I don't know, it's just like any other small town in Tennessee, except it has a small private college, and a bunch of stuck up assholes roaming around. I'm planning on moving away later this year, so I won't really have to deal with any of those people anymore.

RRP- I know you aren't far from the Rockabilly Hall of Fame in Jackson and have gone on record as being less than impressed with it. What is it like?

JN- It's sort of a joke. I missed the Rockabilly Festival they have this year because I was out of town, but I went a couple years ago. It was really bad. The actually museum doesn't even have that much stuff, but they do have a number of xeroxed Sun 45's displayed on the walls.

RRP- Did you visit the Rock'N'Roll Hall of Fame when you were in Cleveland? What did you think?

JN- I finally got to go to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame back in April. It wasn't that great. I was hoping they'd have a bunch of KISS stuff, and they didn't. They did have Johnny Thunders' Les Paul Jr., which was cool, and there was an awesome B-52's display. It would have been a rip-off if we hadn't got in for free. I doubt I'd ever visit that place again, but Cleveland's cool. The Beachland's a great venue, and Bim from the Bassholes/This Moment in Black History lives there!

RRP- Who were some of your influences as far as doing the one-man band? Didn't you write a research paper on Hasil Adkins? What was that for? Were there other OMBs that you saw or heard that influenced you?

JN- Yeah, I wrote a paper on Hasil Adkins for my English class a few years ago. I think I got a B? The one-man bands that were the biggest influence on me were King Louie and John Schooley, especially his first 7" on Goner. I was really bummed out when John Schooley opened for the Rat Traps in Austin, and he wouldn't play his old songs that I yelled out. King Louie rules! He'll pretty much play any song you yell out, even old Persuaders and 10-4 Backdoor songs. But as far as one man bands go, no one's as good as BBQ. Mark Sultan's the best.

RRP- You've said that you prefer recording your one-man band yourself on a 4-track in your garage. Do you have a different view on recording with a full band? What are the reasons you prefer this way of recording and the sound it yields?

JN- It's really cheap to record on a 4-track, and as long as you don't turn the microphones up too loud, it sounds pretty decent. I've never recorded on anything else, so I don't really have anything to compare it to. There's no really difference between recording my one man band and real bands. I just set up microphones, push record, and bash it out.

RRP- I've read that you that you don't play songs off of your early one-man band releases. How come? Do you feel that your newer material is a lot stronger, or did you just get tired of playing the older songs?

JN- I don't really remember those older songs that well. It sucks when people yell them out, and I can't play them. I got busy coming up with new stuff and forgot about the old stuff. I think the later stuff is better, but I still like the older stuff. The next time I go on tour, I'm going to try to play some older songs.

RRP- I understand that Joe is no longer in the Rat Traps [Jeffrey's other band] and is in the Feelers now? What happened, and are the Rat Traps still together?

JN- The Rat Traps broke up after the Chicago Blackout back in May. We had gotten offers to do an album and tour Europe, but the band wasn't really fun anymore. Joe and I were both really tired of it and wanted to do other things. The Feelers' bass player had just quit, so it was the perfect opportunity for Joe to join the band.

RRP- I know that you were stranded with the Feelers in Columbus, Ohio, for about two weeks after Horriblefest last fall. What happened, and what did you do while there for that time? They told me they basically only showed you guys the walk from the beer store to their house.

JN- That was such a weird time. Our van broke down in Cleveland, and we drove down to Columbus with the Feelers and hung out there while we waited for our van to get fixed. It kind of sucked because it was like we were stuck in limbo waiting around for the van to get fixed. I was missing a lot of school and I was broke most of the time, but my girlfriend had come with us, so it wasn't that bad, plus the guys in the Feelers are easily some of the coolest people on the planet. We couldn't have been stuck with nicer people. I love those guys! Plus they live really close to this bar called Cafe Bourbon Street that has dollar tacos on Mondays!

RRP- Speaking of Columbus, it is home to the Cheater Slicks and is the former home of Don Howland, both

of whom you've cited as big musical influences. Have you had a chance to meet and/or play with them?

JN- I got to meet Don Howland over at Jeff Evans' place the last night of Goner Fest II back in September. He was really cool, but I was losing my voice from screaming so much that weekend, so I didn't get to talk to him as much as I wanted to. The Rat Traps got to play with the Cheater Slicks in Columbus on our tour with the Fatals, and after the show we all went back to Tom Shannon's place for a party. It was a blast! Tom's got an amazing record collection, but it's not in any sort of order, so he has to dig for records. Getting to play with the Cheater Slicks and then hanging out with them after the show was easily the highlight of that tour.

RRP- I understand you have another band with your sister called Night Shift Nurses. What can you tell me about that band?

JN- April didn't really have much to do with that band. It was mainly just my girlfriend Jemina and me. We were both obsessed with all of the 90's South Bay bands like the Brentwoods, Spoiled Brats, and the Bobbyteens, so we wanted to start a band like that. I wrote a bunch of songs, and we recorded them with Jemina playing bass, April on guitar, and me on drums. We only recorded once and none of the songs came out well, so we didn't end up doing anything.

RRP- I know you were working on your own label called Sonic Assault Records. What releases do you have, and what is planned for the future?

JN- It's sort of a joke to call it a label. I just put out crappy CD-Rs of whatever band I'm playing in at the time. I put out the new Cheap Time stuff.

RRP- You've recently finished up a summer tour. How did that go? What were some of your favorite places you've played? Do you tour alone, or do you bring people out with you?

JN- I was on tour with the Rat Traps from the beginning April till the end of May. The first half of that tour was with the Fatals. There was a lot of drama, but I had a good time with those guys, especially Piero. There are just too many memorable shows and experiences to mention from that tour. All of the shows were great except for the one in Nashville, but that was no surprise. I was home for about 3 days after that Rat Traps tour before I left to go on tour with my girlfriend's band Be Your Own Pet, which lasted about a month.

RRP- What can you tell me about your new band called Cheap Time?

JN- After the Night Shift Nurses didn't work out Jemina and I still wanted to do a band together, so we started Cheap Time. It's not as mean as the Rat Traps. I play guitar, Jemina plays bass, and Nathan from Deluxin'

plays drums. We played our first show a couple weeks ago opening for the Feelers in Nashville.

RRP- On your Myspace page you list guitars as one of your interests. Could you talk about what guitars you use, and your set-up in general?

JN- I've had a bunch of different guitars over the years. I always use my Silvertone and my Airline for my one man band stuff, but I've got some other stuff like a '63 Fender Mustang and an Ibanez Iceman that's really cool. I've got a bunch of amps too, but from what I learned on the last Rat Traps tour is you should never tour with an old tube amp. My Fender Super Six is so busted now. I really want to get an old solid-state Peavey Classic, because those things never die.

RRP- What other sorts of things are you into aside from music?

JN- I love watching TV. I hate going on tour because I always miss so much great TV stuff!

RRP- What are your plans for the future as far as releases and touring?

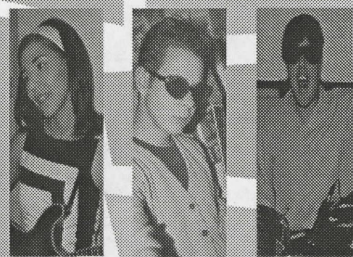
JN- I'm recording some new one-man band stuff next week that's going to come out on Cass Records if Ben still wants to put it out. Cheap Time has recorded a bunch of stuff, so we'll probably have a record coming out sooner or later, and once Nathan turns 18 we'll be able to go on tour.

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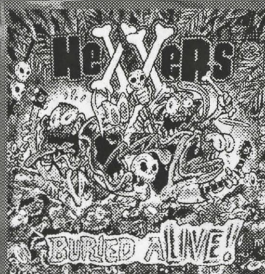
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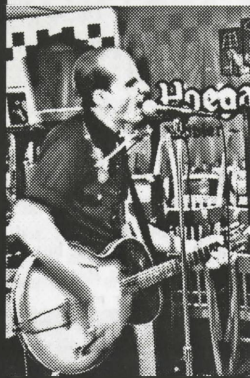
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LESS
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Ghostwriter

Interview by Ben Lybarger



The first time I listened to Ghostwriter I was driving home late at night from Columbus to Cleveland on Rt. 71. I let the CD "Road Angels & Torrential Rain (Travel, Murder, + Loss)" play all the way through three times. There was just something gripping about it that reflected both the oblivion and the possibilities of the open road. As the title suggests, there is a certain amount of anguish in the vocals, which are delivered like an abrasive scrape across the gut. Ghostwriter's dark Americana further proves the notion that the one-man band is the purest form of musical expression. His lyrics come off personal, compelling, and literate. It is definitely not easy listening as he almost pathologically rants and raves, exposing his skeletons and pulling you into the strange world of a perpetual outsider that embodies the American spirit at its most gritty, true, and vital. Part John Wayne, part Charles Bukowski, Ghostwriter is a storyteller who creates a solitary aura that reminds me of doing shots alone in a dark corner bar on a weeknight. He sets to music the subconscious of a nation's discontent, and it is good music at that - Ben

RRP: How did you arrive at the name Ghostwriter?

Ghostwriter: I like the definition, anonymous or uncredited. Also, I like that it sounds dark and solitary.

RRP: Can you talk about the progression of bands you've been in? What was the sound and feel of bands like Billy Swamp, The Standards, and End of the West, and what propelled the evolution towards a one-man band?

Ghostwriter: The Standards was kind of a rockabilly thing and was around the longest. End Of The West formed out of the ashes of the Standards. It was still rootsy but with a little darker take, similar to the stuff I'm doing now but slicker. Billy Swamp was a drums and guitar duo predating both of them. For years I hated this band but now it might be my favorite. It was really raw and there's a lot of similarities between Billy Swamp and Ghostwriter songs. Both use pretty simple instrumentation, not a lot of changes or solos, and can seem kind of ranty. If there was any one thing that drove me towards playing alone it was constant changes in line-ups. In five years the Standards went through five bass players and three lead guitar players plus a couple fill-ins. It was ridiculous. The first one-man tour I did was an accident really. It was booked for End Of The West and both the other guys flaked out with pretty short notice. At the time, I chose to play the shows solo instead of canceling the tour or looking for fill-ins. I felt really defeated and it was just something to do, but it ended up being a good thing.

RRP: Who is Cole Stephens?

Ghostwriter: He's an alter-ego singer-songwriter of mine. My full name is Stephen Coleman Lile Schecter. Cole Stephens is just the first half backwards. I used to play solo acoustic gigs under that name when the Standards and End Of The West were around. I guess I've always had an aversion to using my own name.

RRP: Your bio says that you hopped a train and left Portland at age 19 to arrive in Austin where you still reside. What made you want to leave Portland, and what made Austin seem more desirable? What were your ambitions then, and how have you achieved them to this point? (And did actually "hop" the train?)

Ghostwriter: Austin looked like a good change and even then I was aware of a lot of great bands and songwriters from Texas. I only figuratively 'hopped' the train, I bought a ticket. I'd lived in Oregon my whole life and just wanted to try something new. Austin was my only destination. I didn't plan to stay for nine years but it worked out that way and I still like it here. My ambitions have always centered around playing music, so I think of it as a success. I'm playing music that I like right now and I'm able to book tours and sell albums. I used to compare myself

to other musicians and think that their success meant I hadn't achieved something or that I should be thriving for a "next level." Now I think just having gigs now and planning them for the future is as much as I could hope for.

RRP: Your bio also says that you have gone on six national tours, focusing on the East coast, Southeast, and Midwest. It seems like you avoid the West Coast where you came from. How come?

Ghostwriter: It's not intentional to avoid the West Coast. The Western half of the states is a lot more spread out than the Midwest and East. I started touring in the Midwest and then spread to the East Coast first. It's a goal of mine to play some shows out West soon, but lately it's just been easier to continue touring in places I've already been.

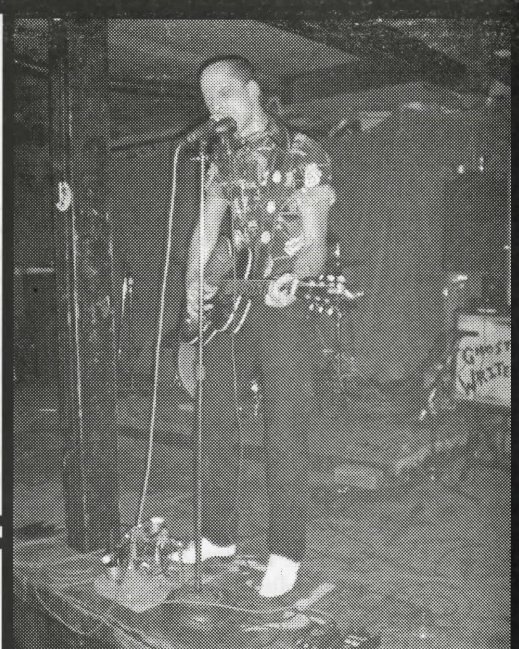
RRP: *Let Them Eat Lead* touts you as the "most punk rock motherfucker" in Austin. What's your appraisal of the punk scene there, or the music scene in general?

Ghostwriter: Austin has a lot of great bands. There's always a thriving rock n' roll scene here and a lot of country. As far as punk rock goes, I would think it's a bit confused everywhere right now. There's a lot of major label bands and pop radio music calling itself punk when it's obviously a lot tamer than the original. I'm no expert, of course, because original punk rock was before my time. I first started going to shows in the early nineties. Even then there were more bands like the Cows and the Jesus Lizard who, although [they] didn't call themselves 'punk', brought a lot of punk elements to the stage. Crowds and performers both seemed crazier back then and anything might happen in those little clubs. If it doesn't make people uncomfortable it wouldn't be punk rock. Those elements still exists in music, they're just displaced. That's why guys like me get quotes like that.

RRP: Being often described as "punk" or "folk" or some amalgamation of the two, I'm wondering what you see as the common ground between those genres?

Ghostwriter: In theory, both punk or folk songs could be written and sang by anyone. Neither genre requires much musical training or knowledge. Also, both are used for social commentary or protest and don't need an expensive production to get the point across. I think a lot of rock'n'roll could be considered an extension of folk music.

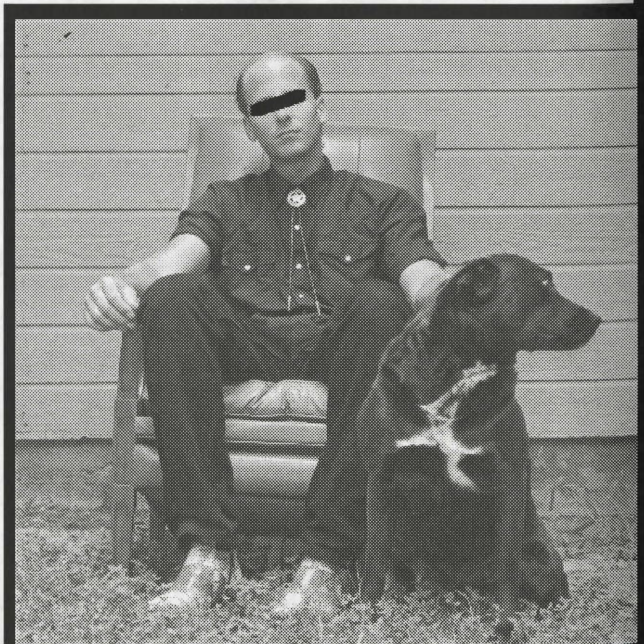
RRP: How did you meet Dexter Romweber, and how was the tour with him?



Ghostwriter: I opened for Dex in Chapel Hill in May of '03 and he was really supportive of me. I've listened to Dexter's music for a decade now, so it was hard for me to believe that we would tour together. I thought opening one show was cool enough but we ended up doing ten nights up the East Coast that August and a month-long stretch together in the spring of '04. Those tours were a lot of fun and a real learning experience for me. Dex is a wealth of musical knowledge and a total pro on the road. I have nothing but respect for Dex and consider him a good friend. I'm sure we'll play more shows together.

RRP: Speaking of touring, your songs carry the feel and imagery of the road. Do you do most of your writing on the road? Do you think being there helps you to see things differently? What have been some of your most memorable moments while traveling, and do you usually travel alone on tour?

Ghostwriter: Yes, I always travel alone except for the two tours with Dex. I keep a journal on the road so I'm constantly writing when I travel. It's all memorable because I love touring. I seldom write complete songs on the road but I get a lot of inspiration while I'm out there. It definitely changes your perspective. The more you see, the more you become aware of. I'm glad to hear your comment





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-- Sleazegrinder.com

www.hellvisrocks.com

www.myspace.com/youngstownturbolover

about 'Road Angels.' Making long drives in the middle of the night is one of my favorite things and I wanted to capture some of the emotions you can go through out there. It was definitely my attempt at a road album.

RRP: What happened recently to your truck?

Ghostwriter: My truck got totaled last February. A guy ran a red light and there wasn't much I could do about it. It was a good old truck, an 86 Nissan, and I'm sentimental because I had done a lot of touring in it. Really it was a pretty intense wreck and I'm lucky to have been unscathed. I'll get another truck soon.

RRP: Didn't you just get back from a European tour? How was that? Meet any interesting people?

Ghostwriter: I was invited to open for T-Model Ford in London as part of a series of shows called "Not The Same Old Blues Crap." The guys who put it together also included me on a compilation called "This is Punk Rock Blues." It sounded like a great opportunity, so that instigated the trip. I ended up doing four shows in England, four in Germany and one in Holland. It was a short tour but a really good time. The crowds in England and Germany seemed really receptive and I'd like to keep going over there.

RRP: A lot of your songs have darker themes, painting bleak and desolate landscapes, both internally and externally, leading to critics to laud them as nearly post-apocalyptic. Where do you think that comes from? Life experience? What inspires your song writing? How much is autobiographical?

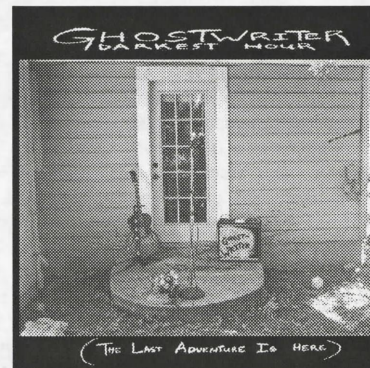
Ghostwriter: It's a combination really. Some of the songs are completely autobiographical and some have fictional elements. The emotions in the songs are all derived from life experiences but I'll use

fictional characters and settings sometimes to express them. I'm not sure why I do that. Sometimes I think my best songs already existed in the atmosphere and I didn't really write them I just stumbled in to them. I get a lot of silly comments about how my music is dark and I must be depressed or need psychiatric help. I think that's just a sign of how watered down everything is. I thought discontent was a major ingredient in Rock n' Roll. All the music I like has darker elements and can address personal topics. It's true my songs can be bleak, but life can be bleak. Giving a voice to people who have gone through some hardships is one of the most important roles that music can play.

RRP: What about the Libertarian platform appeals to you most?

Ghostwriter: Everything. I am very anti-government. I believe that people minding their own business, and making their own decisions is the answer to a lot of America's problems. Most laws in this country have no intention of solving anything. Gun control doesn't cut down on crime anymore than the war on drugs keeps them from being available. Non-violent criminals take up the majority of our jail space. We keep guys in county jail for back alimony and child support. Now how could that be productive? There are hundreds of ways that our government is ineffective and tedious. They're aware of it, but by regulating illegal markets and various individual behavior, they're employing 30% of our population. I believe a non-regulated society could be progressive and brilliant, and no less corrupt than America today. A lot of ideas I like are based in anarchy, which like libertarianism, requires the belief in humanity. The philosophy that if given the freedom, people will still act with good intentions. The notion of not having a government to rely on for everything from social security to censorship scares a lot of people. That's because we've been conditioned not to be responsible

for ourselves or trust our own judgment. The truth is, there's a lot of Americans who are completely un-reliant on our government, and even more who are hindered by it in some way. One of the main Libertarian platforms that attracts me to them is this: The government should be extremely downsized and most of what it does could be done better by private organizations. I like making people aware of the Libertarian party because they've been around for over thirty years and their ideas are quite intelligent. Although they get little attention from the press, they're actually the largest third party in the States with the most people holding offices. Unfortunately, as much as I agree with what the Libertarians suggest, I don't spend much time on politics. I find it futile within our existing system. For the kind of changes I'd like to see we'll need a full-blown revolution. I'm hoping to see that within my lifetime.. and that's why I don't talk much politics.



Get a copy of the new Ghostwriter release, "Darkest Hour"

Almighty Do Me A Favor



RRP- I've read that you've "dealt with a flying mattress to get shows." What does that mean?

ADMF- I think that was from my first show out of town, down in San Diego, and either on my way there or on my way back from the show a mattress had either just fallen off or had just been ran over and made to flip by someone in front of me, but it was a dark obstacle that had to be dealt with.

RRP- Why did you feel that you had to get out of Alabama? Does it seem like removing yourself from there enabled you to really see how it influences you and your songwriting, in the way that it would an expatriate writer, for example?

ADMF- At the time I left I thought the band I was playing in, the PineHill Haints, was breaking up, and I knew a few people back home were either wanting to move to Portland, Oregon or Seattle. I suppose I wanted to move there as well... but my friend Land called me up, we'd been roommates back in Auburn for a few years before he moved to LA, and one day he called me up and told me he bought me a plane ticket. I went out for a visit, didn't really like LA but decided to look for a job, and couldn't get a dish washing job anywhere in the city, but I was able to get a job at a library and so I stayed. But as far as the expatriate idea goes, if anything like that happened it was never intentional.

RRP- Tell me about growing up as a skateboarder punk rock kid in Ashville, Alabama. What is Ashville like? Other than friends and family, what do you miss about it?

ADMF- I never actually lived in Ashville, I lived about a mile outside of there in an area called Lizard Lope. My dad was a member of the Lizard Lope fire department, which was a truck that looked like a converted septic pump truck with Lizard Lope Fire Department painted with a brush on the side of it. But I went to elementary school in Ashville, there's some strange history to the town, a lot of weird stuff went down there. Like the town was founded by the Ash family because their daughter had died close to there, and after the family buried her they didn't want to leave her behind so they settled there. But around the time I was 12 my parents divorced and I moved with my mom to Springville, Alabama. What

Almighty Do Me A Favor is Bradley Williams, a man of many talents. He is writer who has penned articles for publications such as *Razorcake*, *Chunklet*, and *Thrasher*. He has been in several bands over the years, including the Pine Hill Haints where he played washtub bass and harmonica. He is also an avid skateboarder, with the busted teeth and concussion to prove it. He lives in Los Angeles, but he was born and raised in Alabama, and the spirit of the Deep South still haunts his music. I met him in San Pedro back in June, and one thing that's blatantly obvious after a few minutes of talking with him: he is incredibly passionate about music - one-man bands in particular. Listening to his own output, you immediately recognize that he's not just whistling Dixie. He sings with exactly the kind of soul and charisma you'd expect from someone who's had "a hard time living the good life." He has been known to uncork his pastoral puree of desperate rock'n'roll, country blues, and splintered folk in shopping center parking lots, alleyways, and city parks where he's had to pilfer power to run his amp. I did this interview with him in Sept. 2006. - Ben



Photos: Todd Taylor

do I miss about it? I miss the entire state; I miss the creeks, the hills, the trees, the rain, I miss going into service stations late at night, and the Waffle House.

RRP- What do you think are the upsides and downsides of living in L.A. now? Are you happy there? Do you think you'll ever move back home?

ADMF- I left L.A. and now live in San Pedro. L.A. can be fun. For a while when I was living there we said L.A. stood for "Little Alabama" cause there were quite a few of us from Alabama living over in the Echo Park, Silver Lake, and the Little Armenia area. L.A. can be a little intense at times. There's a lot of traffic and a lot of people, and everyone's trying to do something there, and sometimes it seems like there's no chilling outside and drinking a beer in the shade, which I think is important in living a healthy life. I moved back to Alabama for half of last year, I may move back there at some point, but not right now. Now I'm swimming in the Pacific and riding my bike along the coast. I suppose I'm on a working vacation.

RRP- You've said that you basically started the one-man band when you moved to L.A. and didn't know anybody, but you also seem to know a lot about its history. Was this something you learned about after you started doing it and learned about other one-man bands, or have you long been interested in this tradition?

ADMF- I started learning about it as I started doing it. It's like most people when you get interested in something you want to know the history of it as well. So while I was working at the library in L.A. I would sit on the computer and research a lot of this stuff, and ended up learning some of what I think are interesting ideas as far as music goes.

RRP- How long were you with the Pine Hill Haints? What other bands have you played in?

ADMF- Jamie, Adam, Matt, and myself started the Pine Hill Haints almost 10 years ago. I played the washtub bass, which I learned to make by hanging out with a guy on the streets of Auburn who was playing one. The reason I left was I thought the band was over. Adam had hopped freight down into Central

America, and Matt was wanting to go back for a second degree. And me and Jamie misunderstood each other, so things go the way they go. Now I've played several shows with them in the past year, and just played some washtub on a couple of tracks on the new record. So in a way I never left the Haints, which makes me glad because I love that band. As far as other bands go, me and Jamie had another band called Shoot 'em Down, and then I was in Dead By Dawn, The American Dream, the Plain Clothes Creeps String Trio, and the great Wolf Lightning, which has never played a show, much less practiced.

RRP- You've said that being in regular bands you'd get into fights... that the OMB is "less violent." Did you get into actual fistfights? What sort of problems did you run into working with other people?

ADMF- The fights I was talking about came from the Plain Clothes Creeps, which had some drinking problems as well as other bullshit, and I'll leave it at that.

RRP- I've noticed occasionally people have been talking about a flux of one-man bands as of late, and apparently are getting jaded by it. How do you feel about this? Do you see this getting big like the whole two-piece thing a few years ago, or do you think it is still too rudimentary and unpolished by design to become that popular? Do you think it runs the risk of seeming like a novelty act?

ADMF- If people are jaded by it then they should look for something that makes them feel better. They should go ride their bike or do something more productive and participatory than being jaded. As for the whole two piece thing, I see that as hype created by the big music media so that they could have something to write about and the record companies could have something "new" to sell. Two piece bands have been around forever, it is nothing new. The same with one dude acts. That stuff's been going on forever. As for a one man band being a novelty act the people that are troubled by being jaded and calling art a novelty should ride their bike more, or go hiking, or swimming, you know? If there's people like that they should try to do something else with themselves. But that's up to them, I can't fix them.

One thing I think should be said is that if it wasn't for Hasil Adkins most of the people out there doing it wouldn't be.

RRP- In relation to that last question, do you really see any OMB's doing it because it is trendy or anything like that? I don't think I've come across any of those. While it seems to have its practical advantages, aren't there also a lot of challenges to playing as a OMB versus having a whole band, technically and as far as showmanship? Is it hard to work a room sitting down, and do you feel more limited with what you can do musically? Do you think that it necessarily takes someone who is especially expressive to make it work and have people connect with it, since it is just you up there alone, sitting? Does individual personality come into play more with the OMB? Is there a lot more pressure?

ADMF- Playing by yourself is not so easy, what I mean is that sometimes you got a show or a tour and there ain't no one to go with you, so it's just you and the road. And you may have to drive all day after a night of little sleep and get to the spot and find some way to be ready to play. When I used to play washtub bass in the Pine Hill Haints, I would mess up all the time. I'm sure Jamie hated it, but because of there being other people up there with you there's and energy, and if you fuck up it's not as noticeable. You play by yourself and it's all your fault, and people will notice if you screw up. But I still screw up anyway. And that's part of it. That's going to happen so I try not to think of it as screwing up as much but more of a bit of myself wanting something different to happen and it's not to be fought, so I try to go with it. Sometimes I feel it's right and sometimes I don't think it works so well. But that's life. Not every day everything you do is going to be perfect, and so you can't give up if something goes wrong. You got to live out and play out the time you have.

RRP- What are your favorite or more unusual places to play?

ADMF- I like playing kitchens. That's one of the best places in any house, there's food, water, and most times beer. But I've played parking lots and parks, and alley ways, and bathrooms, living rooms, yards, porches... you know, most of the usual places.

RRP- I understand that you collect records of preacher's sermons? How come? Did you grow up in a religious household? Does that seep into your music at all?

ADMF- I haven't collected religious records in some time now, but I used to. I liked them. They are strange, fear-ridden works, made to try and freak people out. I'm more amazed by them than anything else. I grew up religious, but not overly so. I went to church, was baptized as a Methodist, and then later went to Baptist churches. I did go to church at Pine Hill Church of Christ with Jamie and Katie Barrier and the Can Kickers last fall. And it was cool. The preacher started preaching that he didn't care about no babies crying when he preached. "I don't pay attention to no babies," he said. And about that time a baby started crying and he preached louder and the baby cried and I was hungover as hell, it was pretty wild man. Then afterwards we ate dinner with the church and they were really nice, asking us about what it was like playing in a band far from home. Then we got invited to a lap dulcimer convention at an old folks community center the next day in Waterlou, Alabama, and we went and there was a room with 30 old folks playing lap dulcimers and then we played for them and it was great. It was a great time that I'll never forget. Religion's around us all, I'm sure it seeps into my music, like everything else.

RRP- You've said that you are highly influenced by the music your mother used to listen to, but that she also removed your tapes from your collection, such as the Beastie Boys, Misfits, etc. Why did she do that, and do you think it is kind of ironic that now you find yourself connecting with the music she loves? How does your family like the music you are doing now?

ADMF- My mom took those tapes because I was listening to the Dead Milkmen's album "Big Lizard in My Backyard" and there's a song on there I think is called "It's a Fucked up World" or at least that's part of the chorus, but she heard that one day while I was pushing around on my skateboard and living in Lizard Lope; that wasn't something they wanted kids listening to back in 1986 or thereabouts. The reason I listen to the stuff my mom used to listen to is because I think it's good, and it reminds me of home, and it's some of the earliest stuff I remember hearing. But my parents are happy for me. It might seem a little strange to them, but they like it. I don't think they rock out to it or nothing, but they like that I'm doing something with myself. I hope.

RRP- What did you go to college for and where?

ADMF- I went to college so I wouldn't end up working at the fire extinguisher plant in Springville, Alabama. That and to party. Somehow I ended up getting an English degree. That was at Auburn University, in the great state of Alabama. War damned Eagle.

RRP- You have been doing a lot of writing for *Razorcake*. Do you do any other writing for any other publications? I know you had a list of people you really wanted to interview, which included Hasil Adkins whom you did a two-part interview with. Did you recently also do Billy Childish? Who else is on that list, and have you been able to sit down with them yet?

ADMF- I've been doing stuff for *Razorcake* for about 5 years. I've written for *Thrasher* too, and *Chunklet* magazine, as well as *Spider*—that's Jamie and Katie from the Haints zine—and I've had a short story published by Gorsky Press, but I've really been lagging on doing any writing for a bit. I just got my computer back, so hopefully that's gonna change. I went to Hasil's home and hung with him a few years ago, and that interview was in *Razorcake*. Billy Childish I interviewed earlier 2006. That was pretty neat. And I interviewed Kool Keith, which I couldn't get anyone to run, but that was bizarre as anything I've done on those lines. How that all came about was one day I was bored at the library I used to work at and I thought who would I like to interview. That day was over 3 years ago and I wrote to Jim, who was handling Hasil's internet dealings, and I wrote to Billy's book publishing label, Hangman Press, and to one of Kool Keith's web sites. It took a while. Hell, I had forgotten I even wrote them by the time I first heard back from Jim about interviewing Hasil. That was a wild one and one that I am most proud of. Hasil was a great man and the world will never be the same after him. The interviews were mostly for me just to see if I could do it,

and if anyone gets anything out of them that makes it all the better. I've mostly interviewed my friends' bands; Federation X, 400 Blows, Pine Hill Haints, Immortal Lee County Killers, Can Kickers, Auburn Bikini, and Japanther.

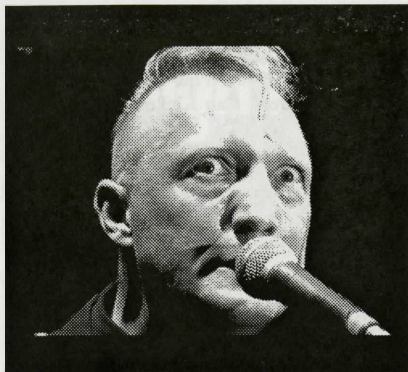
RRP- When you do tour, I know you sometimes hook up with friends' bands and ride with them. How does that work out, and what bands have you hit the road with?

ADMF- I'll hit 'em up and see what they think and if they're down, I'm in the van. Killer Dreamer from San Pedro, California took me out with them down to Mexico, and the Party Favorites, from Bellingham, Washington, the Birds of War from Portland, and this summer I got in with the Pine Hill Haints and the Can Kickers, and did the west with them and a traditional Irish band called Stolen Pony. They are deadly. And the Immortal Lee County Killers took me up into Canada with them last summer. But I don't always tour with other bands. I've done drives where it's just me heading into towns where I know no one.

RRP- Can you tell me about your record label, Kapow, and how you hooked up with them? What do you have planned for the future of ADMF?

ADMF- I got hooked up with Kapow though Rawl from Killer Dreamer, he's in other bands as well. There's a Replacements tribute comp called "We'll Inherit the Earth" that's coming out October 3rd on 1-2-3-4 Go! out of Oakland, I got a song on that "Treatment Bound." I'm supposed to record for an Arkam Records 7" but I've yet to get my butt in gear, as well as a 7" for Razorcake Records, which is just starting out. And another 7" for a label out of L.A. I want to play more, more, and more. I don't have a car, I have a bike right now, so it's a little difficult to make it to shows even where I'm at now in Pedro. I want to keep going and make it from bike to spaceship, you know, see if I can somehow get to Mars with a bass drum, high hat, harmonica and guitar. ll





REVEREND BEAT-MAN

Reverend Beat-Man's attitude and excitement about music is infectious, even as he answered my questions from his home in Switzerland. He lives, eats, sleeps, and breathes music, and he approaches it with an unmatched irreverence & wild enthusiasm. He has performed since the early 80's and soon after founded Voodoo Rhythm Records. As Lightning Beat-Man he started doing the one-man band thing, then later followed his calling and became a self-appointed Reverend. He also has also fronted the primitive garage-punk trashabilly band, The Monsters, since 1986. I saw the Monsters at CBGB's a couple years ago & it was one of the best shows I ever witnessed: true rock'n'roll lunacy at its finest. You can check them out and a lot more great music at voodoorhythm.com. The following interview was done in Sept. '06. Enjoy!- Ben



RRP- You made your first recording when you were 13 under the name Taeb Zerfall. Is that your given name? What were your early recordings like?

RBM- No, my real name is Beat Zeller. I was Born near Bern, that's Capitol of Switzerland, on the countryside. I was a bit upside-down, a Satanist reading Tarot cards and stuff, and I was an Einstürzende Neubauten fan, so I wrote Beat backwards and Zerfall is from a Neubauten song. My father had a good hi-fi System and I had his acoustic guitar, so I started to record with the hi-fi system and my own tape deck: ping-pong, you know, different layers. It was kind of industrial rock'n'roll what I did, and I liked new wave too. It was the early 80's so it's understandable. Ha ha

RRP- You later changed you name to Lightning Beat-Man in 1984 and started doing the one-man show. Could you talk about what used to occur at your shows?

RBM- It was when I was in LA the first time and I saw Mexican wrestling and I was blown away. I thought myself alone on stage with a guitar is quite boring. I was young and didn't know what to do, so I said why not [play] in a wrestling outfit and fight against myself on stage while playing wild rock'n'roll... it sounded good to me and I did it. People liked it. I had a lot of shows.

RRP- Didn't you end up in a wheelchair after a Lightning Beat-Man show? What happened?

RBM- This Lightning Beat-Man show turned into a big success because nobody did anything like that before, so it was growing and we had a band, the Never Heard of Them. We had a whole wrestling show with a cheap-ass ring, an enemy wrestler (Duro Duro), a referee MC, and and and... just wild shit... The problem we had was the people. First they came to a lot of shows and we didn't wanna give them always the same show, so the show had to be more extreme every time we did it. Then they also came with wrestling masks and we were all fighting against each other... Till I broke my nose, guitar player broke his hand, and I broke something in my back. In the middle of the last tour we had to change the concept and instead of a wrestling show did a massage show. A sick one, you know.... Anyway we went to Toe Rag studio in London to record our long

player then went home to Switzerland, and I lost my voice for one year and could not walk anymore. This was the end of the wrestling show.

RRP- So these injuries made you stop doing the wrestling and become Reverend Beat-Man? Tell me about your rebirth.

RBM- Yea it was that, and the idea to hide yourself behind a mask made me a bit nuts, so one day I was stone drunk and lying in my bed and Robert Johnson and screamin' Jay Hawkins came and said: Beat-Man, you are a good man with a solid true heart, go out to the world and preach about blues and trash... I woke up and did it.

RRP- As Reverend Beat-Man, you parody fundamentalist evangelists. What do you preach at your shows? What is the message that you want to bring to the people?

RBM- It is definitely a parody, you know I believe in the good and in rock'n'roll, but I also know the power of the church here in Europe and I see it in the TV preachers in the USA. It's just sick what they do with the words of the bible... I'm also not a big fan of the bible. The bible is only a book, this is a fact. It's the book of life, this is fact as well. But why not get rid of this book and really start to live again? Everybody has to live and nobody should tell 'em what to do and to think. We are a part of nature, so we know from birth what is good and what is bad. I actually preach that. Not in words, more in the feeling of it. I have lots of songs about death, about hate and love, about Satan. Because I think Satan and God are one and the same person.

RRP- I understand that at the Las Vegas Grind you had two nuns accompanying you on the stage. Who are they, and do they usual do shows with you?

RBM- They were good friends of mine. We thought we were having a good time in Las Vegas, so why not take 2 nuns along? My shows are normally very different, it depends on the money and fee I have for a show. Most shows I do one-man style because the fees are so low and I have family and kids I have to feed, but when the fee is alright I play with several musicians together. For example Brother Janosh, he does Casio synthesizer and the tape deck, or Brother Panti christ (he used to play in the Miracle Workers), he'll play the slide guitar, or Dead Delany of the Dead Brothers does the drums, or Chris Rosales or Gerry More and, and, and many musicians and every show is gonna be different.

RRP- With songs like "Fuck You Jesus Fuck You Oh Lord," have you had people get offended and approach you about your lyrics and show?

RBM- Yea sure, Fuck You Jesus Fuck You Oh Lord is in the title very directly anti Christ, but when you listen to the song it's the opposite. It's about when your parents die and your friends and all the people turn the back on you. Normally you have a hate in you if something happens to you, and you start to hate Jesus and blame God for that. This is actually a very normal and deep song to make people

understand to not blame someone else for a pain you have to go through by yourself and to deal with it... but there are always people getting very upset with me: Christian groups who boycott my gigs and try to forbid me, people who think I'm a real priest like dead metal freaks who spit on me while playing and, and, and.. this is a never-ending story.

RRP- I know Hasil Adkins would never do more than one take when recording his songs, but you've taken it one step further. I read that for the Un-Believers CD that you didn't rehearse the songs and you made up the lyrics in the studio. Is that true, and what is the reason for this?

RBM- Free creativity is the reason for that. Freedom in doing what you wanna do. In some songs I had a skeleton of the lyrics and in the recordings mostly everything is changed. It's mostly recorded in one take, so my lyrics are sometimes a bit caveman because my mother language is not English. But it comes out as it comes out, and it's recorded like that. People when they come to the live shows are bit upset because I sing other lyrics at the live shows than as they are on the recordings... Anyway, but songs like 'Back in Hell' always have the same lyrics, and there are some other songs [like that] too. Hasil is the best. I visited him once in his van where he was living. He was a great childish person with a big heart and full of ideas. His sleeping room was covered with bible pages and a Lightning Beat-Man picture was hanging on his wall. I was very happy to meet my only idol. I met some of my other idols (now ex-idols) too... like Iggy Pop or so... but they are all fake against Hasil. Hasil is the REAL DEAL !!!

RRP- What can you tell me about the newest CD by Reverend Beat-Man and the Church Of Herpes? You've mixed industrial in with the gospel trash blues. How did this album come about? Why the Church of Herpes?

RBM- The Church of Herpes, that's old friends of mine. I have known them since ages ago when we'd hang around the same pub and stuff. They went more into the industrial way and me more rock'n'roll. In the year 2000 we met each other again and said hey, why not mix up industrial dark elektro with wild primitive rock'n'roll and gospel? We thought the idea was pretty crazy and we did it. It was not that easy to do it because music like that did not exist and an industrial song normally goes 25 minutes and a good rock'n'roll song is 2 minutes at the most. So we had already [spent] 2 years to find a line where we could work together, and we didn't wanna sound like Suicide or Silver Apple at all. We wanted to make our own music, so we were recording on this album for almost 5 years. It's all 2-track recordings, or sometimes we had a 4-track machine. With industrial music the tricky part is that you make sounds with MS 20 and delays and reverb and whatever, and you are never gonna find that sound again. It's all analogue, no digital crap, so we had to record everything right away. We recorded like 25 songs and for this album we only used a few of them:





the best ones. We did 2 live shows where all the people left the club immediately, and we did a record release party where I did a 2nd World War Hitler poster. The people here in Bern didn't think this was the best idea I ever had. This music with the poster, and on stage we had a big table with 12 girls dressed nasty and eating nasty chicken with their hands, and I was preaching Jesus to industrial music. So there were big protests and people got beat up and police came and, and, and... anyway the whole thing was a provocation and it worked very well... but it was our last gig.

RRP- What sorts of topics do you tackle with the lyrics on this new album?

RBM- It's actually the most blues album I ever did and it's also gospel. It's about how desperate man can be when he has problems with girls. It's an album about the deepest feelings inside, but there are also other things like in US... it's actually about the regime in the USA right now. If you are thinking that you are the only one, you can do everything better than the others, that you have to teach everybody better, then you start to kill the mean people and the world gets good. You start to kill the poor and the world gets rich. You start to kill the ugly people and the world gets beautiful. You start to kill the drug addicts and the world gets clean... so what the fuck would you want? Isn't it the best world that always has 2 sides or more? Isn't that the life we want? Wouldn't it be boring as fuck to live in a world where everything is good? Another song is "A Letter." It's about a person who tries to talk with his father but he doesn't listen. Talks to his mother, sisters, his friends, God, Jesus, and Satan... and nobody's listening. At the end he figures out that he's by himself and he writes a letter to himself. With that he finds himself and he figures out that you have to deal with your self from the beginning on to the end if you do you be a happy person.

RRP- You started Voodoo Rhythm records back in 1992. What made you want to start a label, and how do you choose the bands that you want to release?

RBM- It was because nobody wanted to release my

records. I started releasing from the mid 80's on, together with Record Junkie in Bern, and I learned from Pfifu the record junky guy how to release records. At that time there were no CDs, only vinyl, so there were not a lot of labels around. It was of course a risk to start a label, but I was on tour a lot and did sell a lot of records on tour, and I was trading records with other labels, so I built up a good distribution net around the world. When I was touring I saw a lot of great bands playing with us. They all said they had no label because their music is too strange for the mainstream audience, so I also started to put out other bands and it was a great success... now these days it's very, very hard with the shitty CD crap. Everybody can start his own label. There is so much shit released. I'm shocked how much mainstream shit is around and boring crap... so I have to continue doing the label.

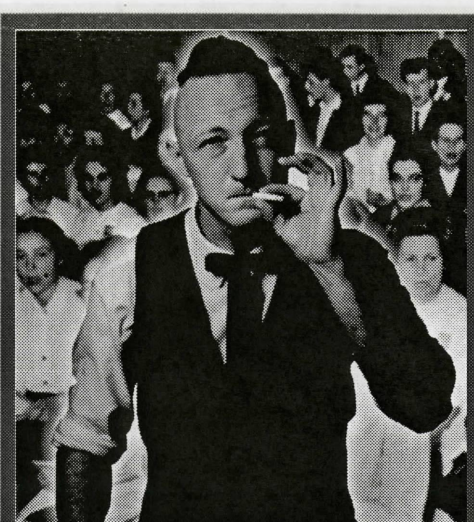
RRP- I've read that you are a fascinated by classical music. What interests you about it, and who are your favorite composers?

RBM- Fuck, I love it. I'm not an expert or anything. The world of classical is so big that it's very hard to see through. I started with blues and rock'n'roll music, but classical music is pretty cool... Arnold Schönberg or Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler and, and, and... it's all pretty crazy with the arrangements they sometimes do. My son loves it too... maybe because Disney uses classical music in the movies, so he gets addicted to classical music through Disney, and I through my son.

RRP- You've played shows all over the globe. Where are the fans the wildest? What have been some of your most memorable gigs?

RBM- I tell you through all the touring, and I think my friend Bob Log III would say the same, they are the same all over the world. Of course there are different nuances, different colors, but all in all they are all the same. We are all human beings and when there is wild rock'n'roll they go berserk from Tokyo over to Buenos Aires, back to New York and Berlin. They all do it if they want or not. My music is Global music. I don't wanna give them a clever message or say something. I want the people to have a good time. Sometimes, for example in Japan, they work the whole fucking day, they are friendly, but you see it: they are sad. Then you do your show, give them everything, and they flip out. They come up after the show, clapping and thanking you for what you did. This is beautiful and a big, big compliment to the music I can do. I'm sometimes very surprised as well, because for me it's only music, the only thing I can do. It's not so abnormal, but for the people who come to the show it is, and they are very happy. I don't know where they are the wildest, but I think Spain is pretty wild and Argentina has the most beautiful girls.

RRP- I understand that the Swiss Constitution states



THE CHURCH NEEDS A NEW FACE REVEREND BEAT-MAN

that every Swiss male is obliged to do military service. Did you do this?

RBM- No I didn't. I'm against war and I'm against learning to kill people, and I'm against the military, this institution who teaches people to kill other people. This is so fucking wrong. No, I did not go to the military, and I never will go. Back then when they called me to come to the military, I went there and I said I wanna talk to the bosses and they came to talk to me. I said if I'm gonna have to do this I'll take a gun and kill someone, so you decide if you want me in the military or not. They said better not and let me go back home.

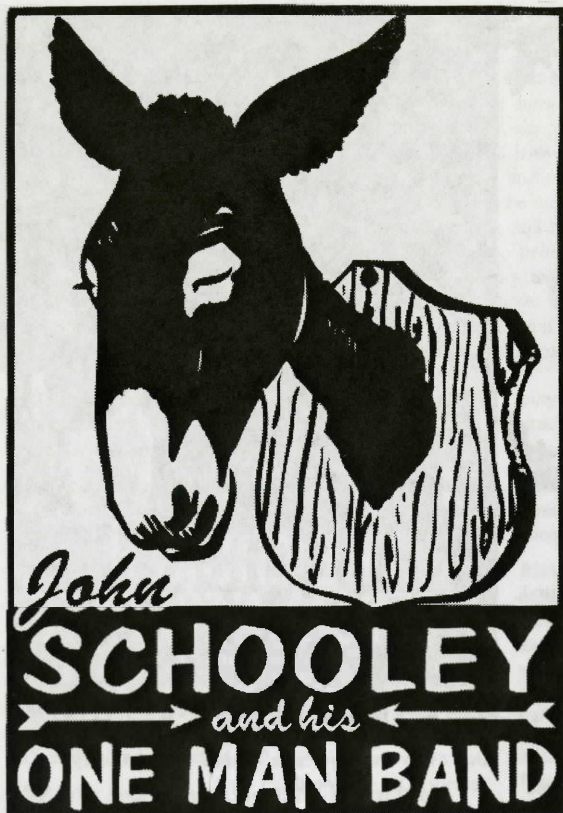
RRP- Do you speak all three of your countries official languages (German, French, and Italian) in addition to English?

RBM- No, only a little bit of Italian, a little bit better French, and o.k. German... but my language is Swissgerman. It's our own language. It's not a written language. People here only talk it, but when we write we write in German or French. Pretty twisted, this language only like 3 million people speak... not many.

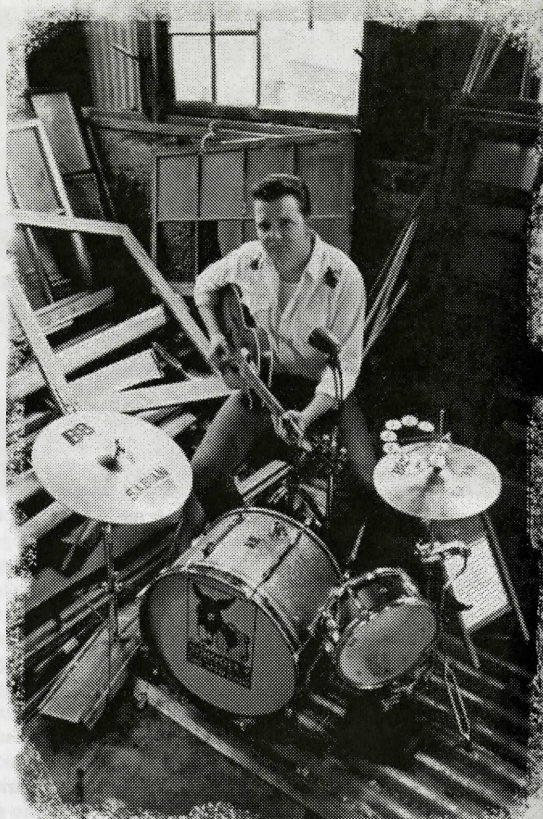
RRP- What are your future plans for your own music, and for the Voodoo Rhythm label?

RBM- At the moment I'm recording demo songs for the new Reverend Beat-Man album, then for Voodoo Rhythm there are lots of new releases: the DVD about the Voodoo Rhythm label is out now as well the new albums by Roy and the Devil's Motorcycle, Come N' Go, and the Giant Robots will come in 2 weeks. Then we are working on albums with Possessed by Paul James, the Waltzloves and, and, and... it will never end.





The best music, like the best writing, is borne from experience. It comes from struggle, pain, and risk... not from staying home in the 'burbs watching TV. This would explain why John Schooley's music stands a cut above. He grew up secluded, deep in rural Missouri and over the years has reportedly taken whatever work he could find, "from oil roughneck to hotel elevator operator." He later moved to Columbia, Missouri, where he formed the now-legendary Revelators (Crypt Records). After their demise he moved to Austin, Texas, and formed the Hard Feelings (Sympathy for the Record Industry, Beerland/Dropkick Records), issuing forth more raucous blues-punk. Ever since he was young, though, he has been honing his one-man band skills. Initially the isolation of his rural setting mandated this lonesome approach, but in recent years he has chosen to refine his skills, becoming one of the foremost proponents of this format. He loves to travel and tour, and once drove 14 hours, from West Virginia to Mississippi, with Hasil Adkins to help the godfather of one-man bands make a recording session. He also toured as the late, great bluesman R.L. Burnside's guitarist. With his latest CD out on Voodoo Rhythm Records, Schooley is clearly not a man given to stagnation, and promises to delivery exceptional music for years to come. - Ben



RRP- Were you really born in Columbus Ohio? So was I. Why did your family move to Niangua, Missouri, and what was life like there?

JS- Yeah, I was born in Columbus but I never really lived there. The family moved when I was a baby. I grew up in Missouri. My folks had both grown upon farms and wanted to get back into farming. My dad worked for a dairycattle organization at the time, but really wanted to own his own farm. They looked around and found a dairy operation that was coming up for sale in Niangua. My grandmother had actually grown up there, but the family hadn't been back to the area in years, it was just a coincidence. So they bought this farm, and that's where I grew up. The small family farm like the one my parents had is pretty much dead in this country now. To be profitable now, most dairy operations milk a thousand or more cows, my folks never milked more than 100 or so at a time. Just a small, family operation.

Niangua was tiny, a very rural community. Population under 500 people - in the city limits, and the farm was about 10 miles away from town. Niangua only had a gas station, you had to drive 20 miles or so to the county seat to buy groceries or hardware or anything like that. 16 kids in my high school class. People find this hard to believe, but we were still on a party line until the late 90's. The phone company simply hadn't gotten that far out in the middle of nowhere with the lines and cable yet. You would pick up the phone and if one of the neighbors was talking, you hung it up and waited 'til they were done before you could call somebody. Like Hank said, "The woman on my party line's a nosy thing, she picks up her receiver when she knows it's my ring." A lot of people probably have no idea what that line means.

I remember one winter there was an ice storm and the power lines snapped, we were without electricity for a week or so. We had a generator so the cows could still get milked. We had food stored up, and a gas stove, and made do. I only found out this was unusual once I got out of the Ozarks. At the time, you know, I thought this

was just a normal childhood. It was a great place to grow up, as a little kid. I had a very Huck Finn kinda childhood compared to what most kids have today. I got up and did chores before I went to school in the morning. I found out from an early age that I was not a morning person. I ran around in the woods and the creek that ran by our farm, I was around animals and wildlife all the time. The nearest neighbors were miles away. This was great while I was in elementary school, but once I hit high school and actually wanted to socialize with others there was nobody. It was again a twenty-mile drive to the nearest real town to be able to cruise by the Dairy Queen, find where the keg party was, you know, the usual small-town teenager stuff. Very few kids from my hometown ever left or went to college, but I was jonesing to get the hell out of there and see the world by the time I got out of high school.

RRP- I know you started performing as a one-man band even before you formed the Revelators. Is that partly due to growing up in the isolation of such a small rural town?

JS- The Revelators was the first real band I ever had. I had been playing guitar since I was a kid (I had plenty of time to practice) but never anybody to play with. It wasn't until I went to college in Columbia, Missouri (a whole three hour drive away from Niangua!) that I heard a Hasil Adkins record. We were lucky that there was a very good indie record store in Columbia, Whizz, and I found a lot of stuff there. I had been playing by myself of course my whole life, but until I heard Hasil it had never really occurred to me that I could play drums, too, and be the whole band myself. I was kind of doing that already, I suppose, just stomping my foot or whatever, but more like an acoustic blues guy or like Harmonica Frank. Just guitar, self accompanied. I thought you had to have a band just because that's the way it was done. I also never thought that I could be a musician because I never knew any growing up. It was a totally crazy idea, like deciding to run off an join the circus or something.

The Revelators practiced in the basement of the house we were living in, and so I could go down there whenever and bang away. So that's when I first had access to any drums. I never even knew any drummers in Niangua. There were no kids with bands. I only knew one other kid who played guitar in my hometown, he was into Eddie Van Halen. There was another kid a couple towns over who played bluegrass stuff, I think, but basically I was on my own. So once I heard Hasil Adkins AND had access to a drum kit, that's when things really came together. Then I started seeking out other ones, like Doctor Ross and Joe Hill Louis and as many as I could find.

RRP- How has the one-man band evolved since those early days, in terms of the set-up, method of recording, and musical style?

JS- Well first it was just kick drum, hi-hat, and guitar. I recorded my first single on Goner with just a boombox and a Radio shack mic hanging from the ceiling. I just thought it was really hilarious. I was really into the Oblivians, of course, and I remember actually being pissed when "Popular Favorites" came out because I thought it sounded too "clean" compared to the first album! So I just wanted something as trashy as possible, and it was just for my own amusement. Then I sent it to Eric and he dug it, and that ended up being the first record I ever did.

So I kept doing the one man band thing, just for my own amusement, while the Revelators were together. I would just go down and mess around in the practice space whenever. Then the drummer got a new drum kit, and I got the old kick drum so I actually had my own drum. And I would write songs, but if they wouldn't fit with the Revelators for whatever reason I would save them and play them by myself. For the longest time it was just kick and hi-hat and guitar, then I started to play harmonica. But it was really when I added the snare drum that it started to sound like a real band. I did some recordings with kick, snare, hi-hat, and guitar and harp and that's when I began to think that maybe this isn't just a stupid

thing I do to amuse myself, but that there might actually be something to it, ya know?

When I did the first single on Voodoo Rhythm, that was the recording that I thought it really came together and sounded like a real band and not just a "one man band" that was kind of a joke. The recording was still raw, but you could actually hear everything and it was musical. Then when I did the LP I went to a real studio and it was a step up in fidelity, and again with the new LP I just did. I think it still sounds raw, and it's still live, but you can actually hear what the hell's going on instead of it just being a wall of sludge. But some people still want it to sound like the Goner single, and I don't think anyone could actually listen to a full length album that sounded like that...

RRP- Did the owner of Whizz Records in Columbia really used to chase you away when you performed your one-man band in front of his store years ago? Did you, or do you still, play many sidewalk gigs?

JS- Oh, yeah! And the cops, too. I would set up anywhere. The owner of Whizz had a love-hate relationship with the Revelators, because we bought a lot of records from him but we also mercilessly made fun of all the kids who bought Built to Spill albums or whatever. So I was a good customer but also a constant source of annoyance. We practiced in the basement of Whizz for awhile when we started, too. The drummer Mark was a clerk there part-time.

I haven't played a sidewalk gig for a long time. It's too hot in Texas, and I have too much stuff now so I can't make a quick getaway if I have to beat it. I played one last summer in front of a video store in town here and I sweat through my clothes and left a grease stain on the pavement.

RRP- What prompted your move to Texas, and how long have you been here?

JS- I moved here in '99 after the Revelators broke up. It was the coolest city that we played in when we toured. I knew Walter Daniels and Tim Kerr and Mike Mariconda, so I at least I knew somebody. I sure as hell didn't want to stay in Missouri.

RRP- You have said in an interview that Austin is changing due to a technology boom that raised rents and the standard of living, which in turn "tainted the music scene with yuppie bullshit." How much has the scene changed since you originally moved here, and in what ways?

JS- Well, the tech-boom has since busted, and things stalled out briefly, but now it's going strong and expensive again. They are building luxury condos two blocks from Beerland now. When Randall opened that place, Red River was crackhead central. There's a huge homeless shelter a block away. Nobody wanted to go down there. Now, expensive high-rises are going up right down the street. The implications for the live music scene are obvious and ominous, just as far as having a place to play. In the meantime, I used to be able to park right down the street, and now I've gotta walk blocks and blocks just to get to Emo's or Beerland.

Musically, the scene in Austin is kinda stagnant right now. There are still plenty of bands but a lot of them are just the same people re-arranged into new bands. There's nothing really exciting going on. But I don't think that's Austin's problem, that's the music scene everywhere. It's not like there are a bunch of exciting bands from Sheboygen or somewhere that are catching my ear. Music is in a rut everywhere. Austin still has way more going on than most cities I've been to.

RRP- I saw that you are a college graduate. Where did you go, and what was your major?

JS- The University of Missouri. I kicked around a few different majors, from "General Agriculture" (I grew up on a farm, remember?) to Anthropology. I ended up picking "Communication", the fake major. I mostly chose that because it wouldn't require me to take any more math classes, and I could still graduate in four years. It seemed like a nice, vague major that I could bullshit into applying to whatever the hell I wanted to do when I grew up. Still haven't figured that out yet. If I had known there was never any "real job" on the horizon anyway, I probably wouldn't have majored in something even more useless but that actually interested me like English, History, or Art History. Then I'd be even more unemployable than I am now.

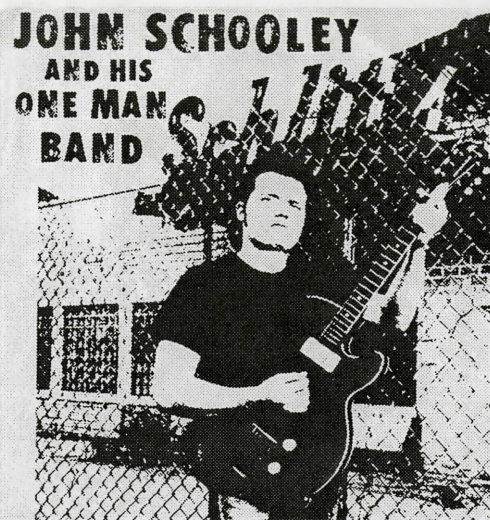
RRP- I've read that the Revelators disbanded largely due to the interpersonal strain of long tours. Is that true? What happened?

JS- Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I'd never planned on that band being together forever, but I thought touring was awesome and wanted to do it some more. I thought we'd put out one more record, go to Europe again, and then that would probably be it. But the other guys were a bit less adventurous, I suppose, and while I thought touring was a total blast they thought it wasn't. I guess the prospect of being in a van with me for long periods of time was too much to bear! So the drummer quit before we recorded the second album, and we got Bill from the New Bomb Turks to record with us. Then Jeremiah quit right after (I mean right after - like a week) we finished recording. It was weird, because I thought he at least wanted to do another tour.

I guess I just don't understand the mentality, that stay-at-home, I-miss-my-couch kind of mindset. The second Hard Feelings bass player had the same kind of thing, we were planning a European tour and he didn't want to do it, and ended up quitting. Now for me, I think touring overseas is an amazing experience and can't wait to do it again, but I've found not everybody feels that way. I don't understand why anybody wouldn't want to. I can see if you have a family and responsibilities and all, but if you're just going to be waiting tables or whatever, who cares? But I guess we've got to consider the possibility that it's touring WITH ME that's the dealbreaker! But hey, Trey (Hard Feelings drummer) stuck it out for five years with me, so maybe I ain't so bad after all...

RRP- You've compared your current touring now to guerrilla warfare, strategically selecting targets then getting in and getting out. This also allows you to also maintain your job. What kind of work do you do?

JS- The one man band thing really lends itself to that kind of thing. I just played NYC a couple weekends ago, then Reno Nevada. New York City I wanted to go to anyway, Reno I probably wouldn't have made it to if my new friends up there hadn't wanted to bring me. But, if I had wanted to route a typical van tour through New York, I would've had to be gone at least three weeks or so, and played a lot of lame shows in-between just for gas money. But if I can make enough to pay for a cheap plane ticket, I can fly anywhere for a weekend and then be back by Monday. I'm not worried about making money (why start now?) but it gets me to some places I might not make it to otherwise without having to be gone for a few weeks. This never would have worked with the Hard Feelings, just because the expenses would've been multiplied by three.



Since you asked, I just started a new job, actually. Ever since I moved to Austin, I worked at a local record store. They were flexible with the time off for touring occasionally, and of course I got access to lots of records. It was a real laid-back atmosphere, you could show up hungover in a dirty t-shirt and nobody cared. It also helped me out a lot as far as getting my music out there, meeting people and musicians in town, etc. But I was there for several years and I was pretty much bored out of my mind by the end. And of course the pay was total shit!

So I just got a job at the University of Texas. It's a big step up in pay and benefits and everything, but it's about as boring as the record store job. At least I'm getting paid a hell of a lot more. My goal is to save up as much money as I can before my next album comes out. Then I'll go on tour again. You gotta understand that while I enjoy touring, I wouldn't want to do it 365 days a year. I don't think I'd ever write a song or come up with anything new if I was on the road constantly. And while it's fun for a diversion, it's also a lot of work. Micky Baker has a great quote describing touring as "wear and tear, talking to a lot of people, and getting drunk." Too true. Probably more work than having a day job. Especially the one man band thing. The European tour last year about killed me. It's very grueling physically to put on the kind of show I want to put on. I end up killing myself even harder rather than taking it easy if I feel under the weather.

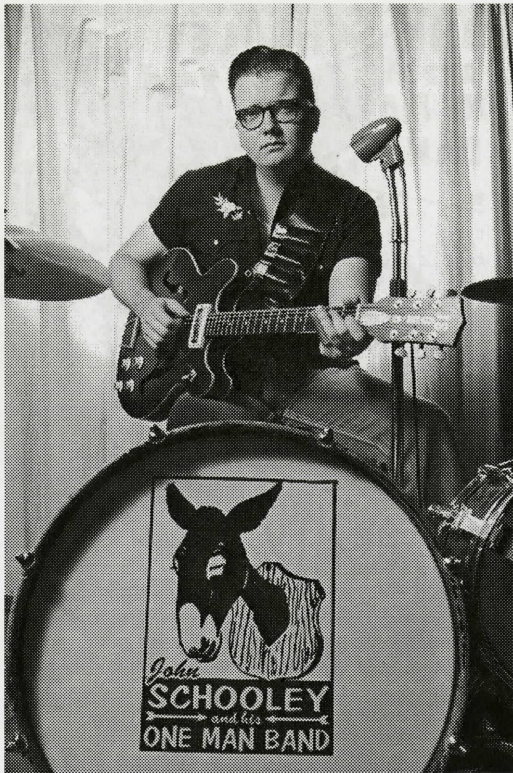
So, I still haven't figured out the whole work/touring equation. Whatever job I've had, it's just been to kill time until I go on tour again. And to subsidize the money I lose on tour. I'm open to suggestions. It's a pretty typical gripe for musicians - either you starve and have no health insurance so you can devote more time to your music, or you work some job you don't like for the security but then your music suffers...

RRP- Are the Hard Feelings still active, or are you focusing now solely on the one-man band?

JS- We just played our last show, because Trey just moved to Holland. I wouldn't be opposed to playing again sometime, if the chance arises, but we were together for 5 years and put out 3 albums. What more do ya want?

RRP- I know you are an avid record collector, and seem to prefer vinyl. How big is your collection, and what are some of your most prized finds?

JS- It's not just that I prefer vinyl (tho' I do, I suppose) but that you've got to have every format to hear all the music. There's plenty of stuff that's



on LP or 45 that's never made it to cd. There's a lot of cd re-issues that you'd never be able to find an original vinyl copy of. So you gotta take it however you can find it. I still don't have an i-pod, but I'm probably going to get one eventually. Gotta cover all the bases.

I don't really know how many I have. Fifteen hundred cds, maybe a thousand LP's, maybe 1000 45's? Aside from just the music they contain, some of my most prized scores are from how I found them. Like, I have a Saint's 45 of "Know Your Product" that I got when I was on tour in Australia, which was a big deal because I'm a huge Saint's fan and I found it in their home country that I had always wanted to go to.

RRP- A few years ago you went on tour with late R.L. Burnside as his guitarist. What were your impressions of him? Any stories? Did he warm to you, or did you feel like more of a hired hand? Did you ever see or speak with him after you were on the road together?

JS- I didn't even get to practice with R.L. before the first show. I tried to get him to run through some songs during sound check, but he wouldn't do it. He just viewed that as extra work. So I had to just get up there and do it. I think he thought that he had HIS shit down, so if I fucked up it was my problem. R.L. was an odd cat. He was very friendly to all the blues society types that would talk him up after the show, all smiles and joking. But deep down I don't think he really trusted many people, he was very guarded. He had the same jokes for everybody, just the towns and people hearing them changed. The friendliness was just surface bullshit, he was a very enigmatic man and I don't think I got to know him, really. But, that said, I think we really clicked musically. He was definitely happy with what I was doing onstage, and told me so, and I don't think he was bullshitting me. I really developed a feel for what he was doing, and how to follow him onstage. And it really effected my guitar playing, I think especially with the one man band. That drony, one-chord groove, I learned how to make that work from R.L. That's one frustration I got from playing with other people, esp. punk rock types, is that they don't know how to just groove on one

chord. There always has to be a change. A rock n' roll bass player won't know how to just stay in the same groove for 5 minutes.

I was very lucky to get to tour with R.L. when I did. A few years later he had some health problems, and he lost some of that fire. He canceled the shows the last couple of times he was going to come through town when I could have seen him. His health just got too poor. So I never got to see him after my last show with him. Which is alright, because when I played with him he still had it, and I wouldn't have wanted to see him onstage looking frail and unhealthy.

RRP- You've said that while touring in Sweden and Holland and other countries with Socialist economies you became more politically aware. What are some of the differences you saw and ideas you left with?

JS- Mainly that the quality of the floors I was sleeping on was vastly improved. I think most people have this image of American's as all being rich, when really, compared to how I grew up and how most of my friends lived, the people in Europe had it much better. I'm all for Socialism. I don't see much point in a few people being able to live well when the vast majority are just scraping by. In the US, yeah, we have more rich people, and they're richer than anywhere else, but there's a big drop off below that. And also in this country, people are willing to trade working their lives away for more stuff, whereas in Europe everybody may have a smaller house but they also get two months of vacation a year. Me, I'd take the smaller house, too. They have their work/life priorities more in order there.

And this just got reinforced when I went to Australia last year. Rich Stanley, who runs Dropkick records and booked my tour down there, got cancer and had to have his kidney removed. For awhile there he didn't know if he was going to make it. With that countries health care system, none of his treatment cost him a dime. And it was expensive. He didn't have a full-time job, he was just running this little rock n' roll record label. Basically, if he had been in the same situation in the US he would have been dead, because nobody would have paid for his treatment. Personally, I'd rather have Rich alive than dead. I think this is a very positive argument for national health insurance.

RRP- You wrote on your site that the employees at Waterloo Records on Austin picked your record as one of the ten best of last year, and that "it must be good on a musical level because on a personal level they can't *%\$@% stand [you]." Why is that?

JS- It probably stems from the time I got really drunk at a Sarah Hickman in-store there and ended up urinating all over the "K" section.

RRP- On your recent tour in Europe with the Guilty Hearts, you had some tense experiences crossing borders into Serbia and Italy. Could you describe what happened?

JS- Oh, just typical border-crossing-drug-search-call-out-the-dogs-we're-seizing-your-passports hijinks.

RRP- On that tour you and Edgar (guitar/vocals in the Guilty Hearts) got into a fight that "almost overturned the van." What was that over?

JS- I don't remember. I was drunk. I pissed off Edgar somehow and he body-slammed me up against the side of the van. Our driver flipped out because the van went up on two wheels briefly. I don't remember what led up to it, but I do

remember the impact. Edgar's a big guy. But we were so drunk we forgot why we were fighting, so then we wandered drunk around Rotterdam 'til dawn like nothing happened.

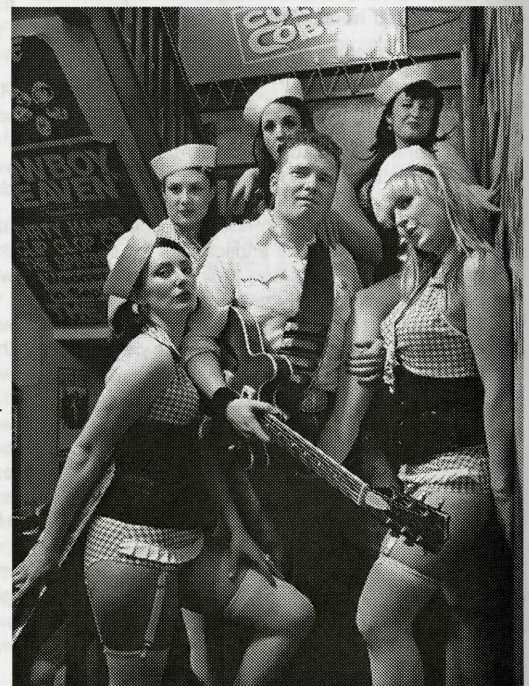
RRP- You, also on that same tour, went to the emergency room in Holland where you had electrodes attached to your chest. What happened?

JS- At first they thought it was food poisoning. I just fell over and started projectile vomiting. Good times. Turns out it was an inner-ear infection. Vestibular nueritis. I got really bad vertigo - room was spinning so fast I couldn't stand up. I thought maybe somebody dosed my drink. I didn't figure out what it really was until I got home. The Dutch doctors didn't really try very hard to give a diagnosis - perhaps an argument against socialized medicine. It wasn't until I got back to the States that my doctor figured it out, right away. Probably a good thing, because had I known what it was I might have canceled the rest of the tour. As it was, I played for another week thinking I should be over it. When I got home and told my doctor what had happened, was like "You did what? You kept playing?"

RRP- How did you hook up with Rev. Beat-Man and Voodoo Rhythm Records?

JS- I met Beat Man a long time ago when the Revelators first toured Europe, when he was still Lightning Beat Man. I had a one man band single on Goner, and he wanted to meet another one man band. He gave me one of his seven inches. That was before he started his own label, I think. We met again later on when the Hard Feelings were in Europe. So when I recorded those four cuts that would later be my first single with Beat Man, he was the first guy I thought of to send it to.

RRP- In my grandpa's day Big Bands were popular, whereas today they are virtually non-existent, and definitely not popular. You could almost argue that bands have gotten progressively smaller over the years. A couple years ago the two-piece was the hot thing. Do you think we are now entering the age of the one-man band? It does seem like more and more are cropping up. If art reflects the spirit of the times, this almost like a distilling of the national character, from the group dynamic of a more collectivist society down to the merits and strengths of the sheer individual. The one-man



band seems akin to the desperado of the old west, which has always been exalted in the American cultural identity. If you look at it like this, McCarthyism killed the Big Band, whereas rebellion and the One-Man Band is a musical form of laissez-faire. Any thoughts?

JS- I think it's just getting economically less and less feasible to have a 4 or 5 person band on tour now. Gas has more than tripled from the price it was several years ago, but bands are still getting paid maybe 100 bucks for a gig. So in that sense it may very well be similar to what killed the "big band" - money. Then they couldn't afford to keep a full orchestra on the road so it went down to small combos. Now, people can't even afford to tour with a three-piece punk rock band. The overhead for that is too high!

I think it's only going to get worse in that regard. With internet downloading so rampant now, tons more people can hear your music, but they still haven't worked out the getting paid part of it. And it's hard to sell mp3's at a show. CD sales are dying, but nobody knows what's going to replace them. Selling CDs and records on the road is really where you make your money. Take that away, and then touring with gas at 3 bucks a gallon becomes more and more impossible. If anything, it's just going to get smaller. People are always going to want music, in some form, but when gas hits 10 bucks a gallon (like it already is in Europe) then it's going to be hard to make a go of it. Another thing the Europeans have over us is infrastructure. They have a railway system and public transportation. We don't. It's going to get harder and harder to make a go of it in this country for musicians. Right now, I need a car to haul all my crap around. I may have to streamline it a bit more, ditch the drum kit and switch to something like a sturdy National metal-body guitar. Just bring that and stomp my boot on a board! I guess that's the antithesis of the "technology will save us" mindset, I guess some people envision the future as showing up at the gig with a laptop and an Ipod. I picture more of a Mad Max scenario. Mad Max meets Woody Guthrie, bumming a ride with a beat up guitar to play in the favela.

On the other hand, I don't know that there are really any more of them, or just that thanks to the internet and Myspace you can find out about more of them. Every little town might have had a one man band a decade ago, but nobody would have known except the few people in that town. Now, everybody has a website.

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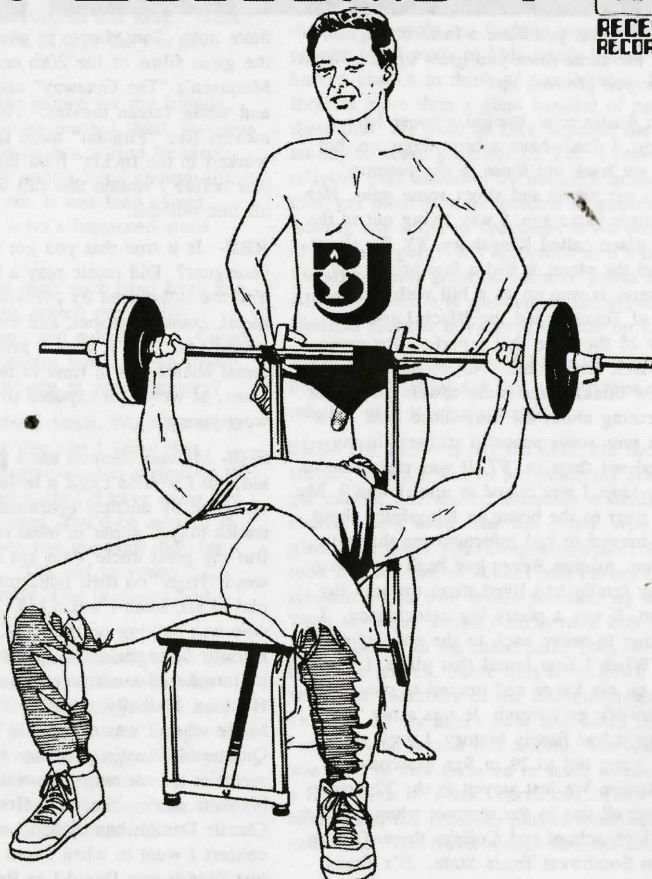
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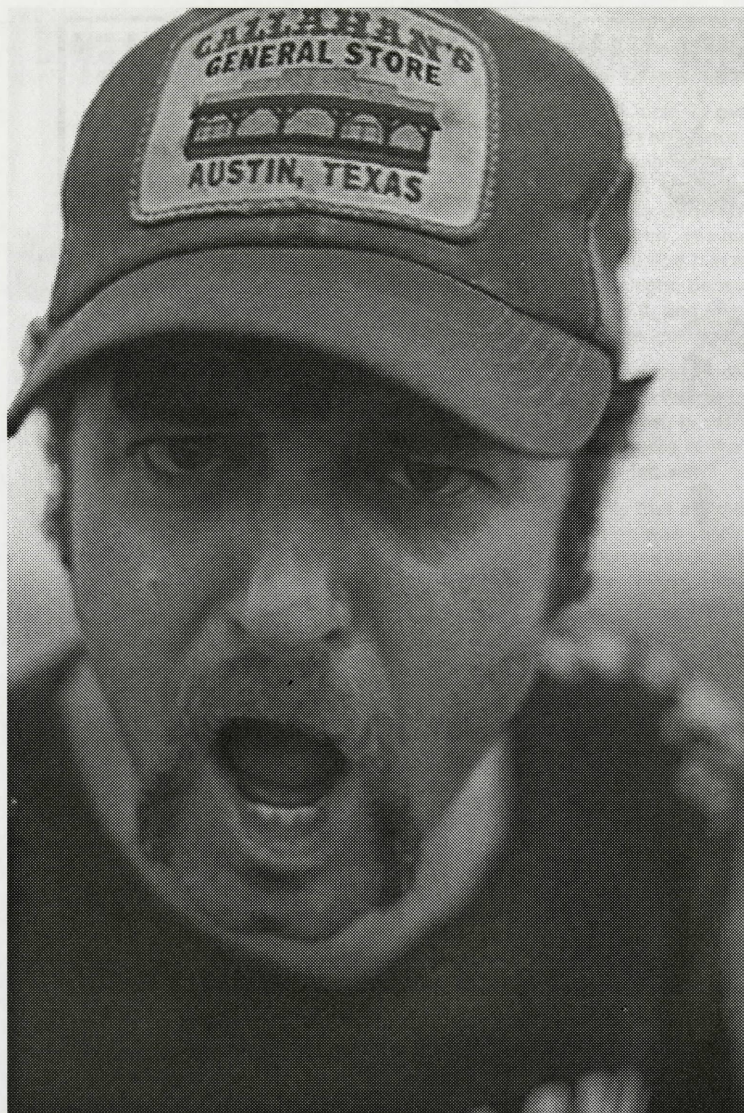
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Scott H. Biram

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Scott H. Biram is one of the most driven men you are likely to ever meet. In 2003 he had a head-on collision with an 18-wheeler. After he was cut out of his pick-up and endured multiple surgeries, he was left with two broken legs, a broken foot, a broken arm and one foot less of his lower intestine. The average person might take a lengthy convalescence, but this event proved not only to renew Biram's song-writing zeal, but he was actually back on stage at the Continental Club in Austin six weeks later... in a wheelchair with an I.V. attached to his arm. This sort of indomitable spirit can't help but be evident in his music as well. Over the many years he's spent as a music fan and performer, he has never eschewed one musical style as he discovered another. Instead, he excitedly assimilates his love for metal, bluegrass, punk, traditional country, garage and gospel into his own unique concoction. Rather than just being a vessel for antiquated musical genres, he employs them for his own self-expression and gives them new vitality and relevance. He is a proud Texan, and undeniably rooted in the sights, smells, and customs of the countryside that he grew up in, getting right what so many pretenders try to evoke. I was honored to do the following interview with him in August 2006. - Ben

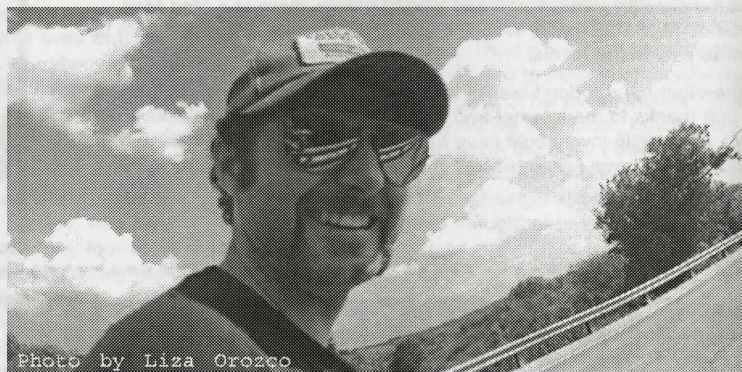


Photo by Liza Orozco

RRP- I understand that you have a farm in Seguin, Texas? Is that the same town you grew up in? What was life like for you growing up?

SHB- I live in Austin now. Bought a house here a couple years ago. I don't have a farm anymore, but I'm itching to get back out there in the country pretty soon. Go get naked and shoot some guns. Heh heh. Until a couple years ago, I was living out in the country near a place called Kingsbury, TX for about 6 years. I rented the place. It had a few barns, and I had some chickens. It was up on a hill with a nice view of a part of Texas called the Black Land Prairie. A part of the state that's perfect for crops with it's rich black fertile soil. Not to mention, there were a few blinking red radio towers on the far horizon. Something about the way those look on a quiet night just puts some peaceful stillness in my breast. I moved out there in '97. It was real close to a small country town I was raised in until I was 9. My Grandpa came over to the house in Kingsbury about a week after I moved in and informed me that my great grandfather, Adolph Beyer had built the house in 1918 and my family had lived there through the great depression. It was a pretty big coincidence. I had been wanting to move back to the country for several years. When I first found that place, I dropped down on my knees and prayed to please let the rental paperwork go through. It was a big coincidence that it had family history. I grew up mostly from 9 years old to 29 in San Marcos, TX just south of Austin. We just stayed in the 72 degree San Marcos river all day in the summer when I was a kid. I went to high school and College there. Got an art degree from Southwest Texas State. It's Texas

State now. San Marcos is where they filmed some of the great films of the 20th century like Steve McQueen's "The Getaway" and all of those old black and white Tarzan movies. They also filmed some B movies like "Piranha" there too. You know, I just worked in the fuckin' food industry like everybody else before I started this full time music thing. Fuck all that bullshit.

RRP- Is it true that you got guitar lessons from your aunt? Did music play a big role in your family? You are influenced by everything from blues to punk, metal, country, gospel, and even old chain gang recordings. Has it been a progression from punk and metal backwards in time to the roots in country and blues, or were you exposed to that music when you were young?

SHB- My aunt showed me a guitar once when I was a kid, but I wouldn't call it lessons. I was always intrigued by musical instruments though. Two of my uncles played guitar in band called "Mile High." But my great uncle went out and painted over the word "High" on their band trailer. Heh. My dad played sax when I was a kid. He used to quiz me on who was playing on the radio. I remember a lot of Buffalo Springfield and Commander Cody. But really he introduced me at a young age to Lightnin' Hopkins, Ledbelly, and Doc Watson. I saw Doc and Merle when I was about 6 at The Armadillo World Quarters in Austin. I remember the strong odor of reefer in the air and some wierdos dancing on some blankets. Heh. Yeah, my first arena concert was The Charlie Daniels band when I was 7 and the first concert I went to when I was old enough to go with just friends was David Lee Roth and Poison in 8th

grade. I'll never forget that shit. I knew I came full circle when I saw CC Deville in the front row of my show at The Roxy in LA a few years back. HA HA! I got into punk and metal in highschool and got my original guitar chops from old Metallica, Black Flag and the Misfits, Minor Threat, Ministry, Butthole Surfers, who knows what else. Motorhead, AC/DC and Black Flag are still some of my biggest influences when it comes to my fuckin' rock guitar side. I got into fast old time Bluegrass Mountain music when I was about 20 and my late friend Steev, The Sleev, Smith kept giving me compilation tapes of all kinds of traditional blues artists. Blues was the first thing I learned on guitar so it's only natural that I have stuck with it. The Punk and Metal just fuckin bleed on through too. I started with the folky shit when I was young then went punk then came back to rootsy stuff and somehow it all got mushed together.

RRP- With a lot of people and bands thinking it is cool or ironic to look and act hillbilly, does that bother you as someone who actually grew up in the country, and who reportedly, to this day, still raises chickens? When I interviewed The Colonel from Th' Legendary Shack Shakers he thought a lot of it is shallow or false, serving to reinforce a negative caricature of rural and Southern people as being unsophisticated? Would you agree with that?

SB- Yeah I hate those goofy dunk dunk boink boink clickety clack I'm a hillbilly watch me stick out my teeth further than they really do bands. I don't like that "it's hee haw time" crap. It's one thing if it tends to slip out naturally. It's another when you're making up your counrty accent. I mean I love the Maddox Family. They were pretty goofy, but they

really were hillbillies! I mean fuck off with that other shit. I've been wearing these old hats since I was 6. If it's good enough for my Paw Paw it's good enough for me. I ate plenty of his deer meat growing up enough to know what's country and what's just fuckin' stupid. I saw a review the other day saying they were pretty sure I hadn't ever run a rototiller in my back yard. Well fuck you!! I grew up in fucking Prairie Lea Texas! The school was Kindergarten through 12th in one building with only about 90 students. I ain't dumb but fuck off, I am country!!

RRP- In relation to the last question, when Pitchfork wrote a bad review of your album saying you played "mock blues," did you think they were directly attacking your credibility as someone who is not "authorized" to be playing that sort of music? Was it a matter of them being unable to distinguish honest music from the many cliché bands who simply affect an image?

SHB- It was a matter of the guy not knowing what the fuck he was talking about. It was a matter of him needing to go stick his head back in his indie rock ass and listen for some more of that digital reverb I'm sure he's so fond of. I have run through fields with a fishing rod at 8 years old headed to the spot where I still know the 40 lb yellowcats hang out. I have fallen in a sewer in my friends back yard, and jumped over so many more in a town where people still eat their own tomatoes and ring chickens necks daily for supper. I have watched a Blue Tick Hound swallow a cat whole. I have ridden a goat. I have spent hours upon hours on rope swings on a river that is quite less than clear. I have eaten my fair share of white bread with cream gravy poured on it. I have had to talk to my grandma on acid. If that ain't the blues...I don't know what is.

RRP- Were you a little bit hesitant when writing your rebuttal to that reviewer? Is that something you feel the urge to do often? Do you usually read your own press? Do the many positive reviews you receive affect you as much as the negative ones?

SHB- I waited a good 2 or 3 months to write that guy back. It just got my goat that he was so wrong. He was so wrong about where I get my inspiration. And like I said before I AM FROM THE FUCKING COUNTRY!! I mean mostly it just pissed me off that I work so fucking hard and I'm struggling to make it happen and I'm playing an honest uncontrived style of music. I just play it like I like to hear it. I mean hey dude, why not just find some band you like and write about them instead of complaining about my shit. Fuck it.. Either way, my name got out there some more and I'm confident that his shitty article put money in my pocket somehow or another. Everybodys entitled to their own shitty opinion. Yeah, I Google my name once in a while and read this and that. I'm still starting out and I DO care what the people think. It doesn't mean I'm going to change anything. I think I have a pretty good idea of how to keep it my own and stay up with the people's needs enough to keep paying my bills. I struggle with depression some, so yeah, I love to read good things people have to say. It keeps me excited about playing for them. As far as the bad ones. Shit!! The worst ones aren't even that bad, and there's another 200 good ones for every bad one. All this hard work has been paying off.

RRP- You've said that the blues and country genres tend to follow formulas, and that you like to push the envelope a little bit with your music to make people think about whether they like your music or not. Does it ever seem that blues or rockabilly crowds are a little less receptive to the aggressive edge that your music has? Is there more of an expectation of a specific sound in these genres that you don't find as much in other genres, such as punk or metal?

SHB- If I see someone shaking their head and frowning when I play a rock song in between a country song and a blues song, I play louder and harder and cuss more. If you don't like it....leave. Mostly when I play a country song for a punker or I play a metal song for a hippie...they tend to look at it with more of an open mind than usual. I win them over with what they like and then subject them to stuff they don't normally listen to. I get a lot of folks coming up and saying things like "I don't usually like ____ kind of music but that was awesome!" or "I never liked ____ kind of music until I saw your show, but you changed my mind about it." My music is like what they say about Texas weather..."If you don't like it, stick around a for few minutes."

RRP- I know that even when you write songs from a character's standpoint, you are still writing about your own anger, love, pain, etc., but you make a strong distinction between that and writing what you call candy-ass, whiney bullshit indie rock. Can you talk a little bit about the distinction between the two? For instance, Hank could write about being alone and forsaken without seeming the least bit whiney or pathetic. How do you achieve heartfelt music that has soul without treading into mopey, self-obsessed waters?

SHB- I think part of it has to do with the backing music. If you are playing a bunch of pretty chords mixed with some kind of flowery dissonant chords it's just not real. The pain gets covered up or lost. I think you gotta break it down into some simple music. I have to concentrate on the grit in my heart and find the anger in my sadness. I gotta find that little flap of scraped-up raw meat under there. Bruises are painful but cuts and scrapes and chafed out rawness is where the music is. That other shit just sounds like someone whose medication isn't quite working. Heroin addiction's a bitch isn't it you whiney fuck!!

RRP- In 9th grade you had a band called "The Happy Trees" (in reference to the painter, Bob Ross) where you played keyboards and sang. What was that band like, and kinds of gigs did you guys play?

SHB- We played in a biker garage for my friends parents, and at another house party. I think that was it. We had like 13 Misfits covers, a Jimi Hendrix song and one original. We hadn't lived enough life to know what to sing about yet. It was kind of sad. Good memories though...A lot's happened since then.

RRP- Later you were in a punk rock band from San Marcos called The Thangs, which reportedly involved "lots of blasphemy and nakedness." Could you describe the sorts of things you'd do on-stage? Any particular shows stand out in your memory?

SHB- We had that band for 4 years. We were some kind of hardcore. Even at that age I knew that people were taking the church war too seriously. We just rocked out, but occasionally I'd have to do one of my show closing dick solos. You'd be amazed at the sound you can get when you use your dick for a pick. Yeah The Thangs... 'I'm old in young body...I'm old in young body...Old in young body...I have to use the potty.' Yikes..

RRP- You later started a bluegrass band called The Salt Peter Boys. I understand that the mandolin player was really a classical guitar player, the banjo/fiddle player was a piano player, and the upright bass player was really a slide trombone player. Did you have to convince them to switch instruments and play this type of music? Did your transition from punk rock to bluegrass seem like a natural progression?

SHB- We all were discovering old bluegrass around then. Everybody was excited about it. There was no convincing to be done. It was natural for me because speed metal is fast, but not as fast as bluegrass.

RRP- What made you decide to leave that band to join Bluegrass Drive-by? It was with them that you started touring. Was being on the road with a full band more trying than going on the road as a one-man band?

SHB- Bluegrass Drive-by seemed to be a step up, so I took it when they asked. I was in that band for about 3 years. One Man Band touring vs. Band touring has it's gives and takes. I have a lot more shit to deal with as a OMB than when you can split up some of the tasks, but there's no ego battles in a OMB. And if one person can tour they all can.. shit! It's just me.

RRP- Was going the one-man band route more than just a practical decision? Were you also interested in the challenge and musical aesthetic of the one-man band? Had you seen a one-man band that really impressed you? Also, do you tour alone, or do you bring people along with you?

SHB- I fell into being a OMB. I started stomping on the floor. Then I said let's amplify that.. I just wanted to be able to play rock clubs with my solo act. I had to step it up and start turning shit up and fuck man, I have four limbs... Might as well use them. I still have my left foot open as of now. I didn't really have any one man band influences when I started. It was more all that old blues footstompin' that I was hearing on those old records that got me started in that direction. I saw Helios Creed and all of his crazy mics a few times and was pretty impressed by that too.

RRP- You've said that you have 2 agendas...(1) To do the lord's dirty work by scaring the hell out of all the anal Christians. And (2) To spread the word that new Metallica sucks a big one." Who are the anal Christians you are intent on scaring? Also, what do you think that last good Metallica album was?

SHB- I said that once as a joke on stage. I just mean that people are fucking scared of God. Some parents build walls in kids minds before they even have a chance to think of possibilities. I'm sure there is more than a giant handful of people out there that are poor as fuck because they sent their money to some preacher on TV. I just think that religion gets distorted by people's misinterpretations, then get passed on generation to generation without leaving any room to speculate. It's a downward spiral of fear and guilt. It's ignorance at it's best. Metallica's last good record was ...And Justice For All. Cliff Burton is spinning in his grave. James Hetfield and the boys need to take up knitting.

RRP- What is the First Church of Ultimate Fanaticism? How did that start? What role does religion play in your music?

SHB- The FCUF is my fan club, but there's a darker story.... When I was in 5th grade my friends mom got cancer. She started attending a small Catholic church in our town. She was cured. Woo hoo!! So glad. God Bless you..Congratulations!! Then she took her son out of school and started home schooling him with books provided by the church. Then my other friend's mom took him out of school and followed in the same path. They were attending the same church. Some kids from down the street were also members of the fine congregation. They knocked on my aunt's door and asked if they could borrow some rock n roll records. She said sure. She was glad to turn them on to some Rolling Stones and a little Men at Work. Turns out...They took them to church and the preacher played them backwards and said "See? The Devil speaks through rock n roll!"

Give me a fucking break already. My dad named the church "The First Church of the Ultimate Fanaticism." And our holy family is still together today...The sweet gospel is now spread through Scott Hiram Biram's music worldwide on a weekly basis. PS- Fuck the dumb shit. As far as the role religion plays in my music..I like old negro spirituals very much, as well as old school southern baptist gospel music. I love the way people rejoice when they sing these songs. I am a spiritual person and I have faith in the unfolding story of the universe, both here and in the outer reaches of reality. I believe in truth, and whether or not I ever find truth, I know that something is true. That's where my faith is. As far as any blasphemy in my music..well, it's like I said before...people just take religion too seriously and they need the shit shaken out of them. I'm the man to do it.

RRP- You've mentioned that part of your influences are from high school and college acid trips. What were those experiences like, and how do they manifest in your songs?

SHB- Ha! Yeah I had some good times watching the wind blow. That's about as far as I'm going with that one. Stay off drugs kids.

RRP- Who are the Weary Boys, who sometimes back and record with you?

SHB- They are a young country band that live here in Austin. They're some of the only people I like to sit around and play music with. They have a great sound. They play country the right way. Not any of that Bon Jovi Country.

RRP- I understand that your music was used on an episode of Dog The Bounty Hunter on A&E and My Name is Earl on NBC. Do you think this helps people to be turned onto your music, or do you think most people are not curious enough to find out who did that song? Are these shows that you are a fan of?

SHB- Actually, it was only "Dog" that I got on, but I've done some film scoring for some documentary films, a few commercials and I have songs coming up in the new Winona Ryder movie, "The Darwin Awards." I never watched "Dog" until my music was on there, but I like to watch it occasionally. He's a funny dude. Yeah, it's good to get music on there because they show your record cover at the end and tell everybody who was playing. Can't beat some good national TV exposure.

RRP- Could you tell me a little bit about the experience of playing on the roof of News 8 in Austin?

SHB- Yeah it was 15 minutes of loading shit up the stairs..then it was 5 minutes of playing.. then a few days later I saw it on TV and it sounded like shit. There's better TV shit of me on www.KXAN.com under the "Out On The Porch" section. I think the link is on my message board under the "Hiram Speaks" section at www.scottbiram.com. Now was any of that computer shit I just said country enough for you?

RRP- What can you tell me about "The Tuesday Nighter?" Are you currently working on music for that?

SHB- I'm done with that. Beef and Pie Productions did a documentary film on a weekly bike race they have here in Austin that Lance Armstrong participates in often. I just scored the film and let them use a few songs. It's cool. No big deal. I can dig it.

RRP- You've said before that you get shit from people for being from Texas. Once even throwing a slice of pizza at a girl in Colorado who straight-up

insulted you. Does this kind of thing happen often on tour? What do you think this stems from? Having just moved to Texas from Ohio, I've noticed there is definitely a lot more Texas pride. Do you think people sometimes misconstrue this as arrogance?

SHB- Yes I think some think it's arrogance but it's just our own little "God Bless America." "God Bless Texas." It's a great place, rich with history and culture. The people are friendly and like to help others. Fuck 'em if they don't like it... Stay where you're at and eat shit. I woulda made some beans and BBQ for ya had you been nicer. I think it's just prejudices about Texas mostly. I don't think people know what they're talking about. Just because you've been to Dallas, doesn't mean you know what people are like in Austin or wherever else. Corpus Christi is completely different than Fort Stockton. I mean come on man!! Fuck off with the Texas shit talkers already. I travel all over and I don't really talk shit about other people's states. I can't believe (well yes I can) that people come to my shows and praise my music then turn around and tell me that they hate my home state. What did you do drive through Amarillo on your way to Tennessee. I mean shit,

Amarillo is north of Oklahoma City!! I'm bringin' Texas to your town and I ain't gonna take this shit much longer.. Isn't Bush from Maine or something really anyway. Fuck 'em. Spoiled little shit.

RRP- Having been put on bills with all sorts of bands in all sorts of venues, what are your favorite kinds of shows to play?

SHB- Anywhere they are packed and rowdy. I like rock clubs and dive bars. I don't care to play in restaurants and coffee shops much anymore.

RRP- I know when you tour you enjoy meeting interesting people and seeing nice country sides. What are some places that you've most enjoyed, and the more interesting people you've met? If you were ever to live somewhere other than Texas, what place(s) are the most appealing and why?

SHB- I love San Francisco and Rome. I could see myself living in the country in Chianti, Italy. That was the most peaceful place I've ever been. I don't get to do much sight-seeing. It's usually...drive...unload...play...load...eat...sleep...drive. It's not as easy as one might think, but I wouldn't trade it for anything....well.....maybe something...



photo by niki ronneberg ©2006

WAYNE HANCOCK

Interviewing Wayne Hancock was easy. He's both likeable and loquacious. In fact, his habit of being too forthcoming about others in the music business resulted in request that I omit a few interesting things from this transcription - a request that I honored, though it kills me. What you'll still get, however, is a sense of the animate personality behind this honky tonk renaissance man who has consistently bucked the trends of modern country music and gained the admiration of fans across the globe, including luminaries such as Hank III, who has covered Wayne's songs to pay homage to his influence and persistence in an almost lost genre. He's played the seedy dives as well as the music halls; sometimes feasted, often famished on the road, and still this seasoned, sometimes cynical, Texan performer remains driven by an enthusiasm for the music and fueled by the growing numbers of those looking for something deeper than shirtless pretty boys posing beside tractors could ever muster. I was able to speak with Wayne "The Train" in November 2004 in the basement storage room at the Beachland Ballroom in Cleveland. - Ben

RRP: I heard you got the nickname "The Train" from riding the railways?

WH: Oh, no, no. Some people lie so much and just make up stories. That's a good one, though.

RRP: So how did you get the name?

WH: I got the name, "The Train," from a friend of mine who was pretty drunk in a bar. This was years ago; I was about 25 years old at the time. He insisted that for my show I should wear an engineer's cap and have these railroad crossing things there and when show was over they would come down. Of course they were just makin' a big joke, you know. I was playin' for drinks and tips at this hole called the Broken Spoke down there in Texas at the time, and people started rememberin' that name. You know how nicknames are; you don't usually like them. There is something about every nickname that nobody likes, but I started liking it when people started remembering it, you know? So I just kept the name and over the years people began to make up stories about how I got it. One is that the way I play guitar is like the wheels on a train, you know how the wheels look when they move? Another is that I am like a train, I don't stop, I just keep going and going. Two or three hours a night I'm playin' usually. At least two. But I have been pulling back on that this tour.

RRP: Why is that?

WH: Because I am coming up on 40, that's why! I ain't 25 anymore! [laughs] Five nights a week, three hours a night that's 15 hours a week to be standin' up on stage yelling at people.

RRP: How many days a year do you tour?

WH: Well, I don't know, but it's a hell of a lot more than 200. During a light year, maybe 175 days, but lately it's more. With playing and touring it's probably 250 days a year. That's a lot of touring.

RRP: So you were in the Marines?

WH: Yep, four active and two reserve. Two reserve inactive, which meant I didn't have to cut my hair and all I had to do was once a year report and say "no I don't want to join." There wasn't no reason to stay in when I was in. It was peace-time, and everybody was downsizing the military. I was gonna re-enlist but at that time you couldn't re-enlist and keep your same MOS, which is what your job is. I was an infantry man, so I couldn't stay in the infantry. I'd have to go over there and be a barracks marine for two years, and I wasn't into that. I wanted to blow stuff up and shoot people, or shoot objects or whatever. [laughs] So I got out: there wasn't nothin' going on. By the time something started goin' on, I was already 29. Your considered too old by the time you're 29, which that's a hoot. Especially when people are referring

to you as a kid and you're like "I'm 29!" So I got out, man. They wouldn't take me now. If they do take me now you better start prayin' because that means somethin's really gone wrong if they call me.

RRP: So where did you grow up?

WH: I was born in Texas. My dad was kinda like me. He wasn't as good a musician, he didn't play for a livin' he played for pleasure, but my father would work one job two or three years. Maybe mathematical engineering, he'd design things, then he'd get tired of that and move somewhere else. We'd usually move a thousand miles at a time. So we moved all the way to Tahoe, and in '71 my dad got tired of engineering or whatever, I'm not into that so the terms might not come out right, but he designed a lot of bridges and tunnels. He was a jack of all trades and a master of just about every damn one of 'em I ever saw him do. So he could go from one job at the extreme one end of the country to the other. He was a forest ranger for two years until he got sick of it and we moved back to Texas. We must've crisscrossed the country probably four times, north to south. I moved back to Texas in '78. Finished out in East Texas at Killroy High School.

RRP: So touring all the time wasn't much of an adjustment.

WH: Oh no. In fact the adjustment was sittin' at home and working a day job, not goin' anywhere and being happy with my \$5.50 an hour, which was good money man, in 80, what the fuck was it? 1988. So long long ago. [laughs] The last century. That'll make you feel old. Anyway, I'm probably one of the few people you'll ever meet that enjoys driving. I really like driving. I flipped my damn van last year. Somethin' went wrong is all I have to say. I wasn't loaded; I don't drink anymore. Certainly wasn't that, and I never smoked any weed that made me that damn high where I flipped my car. I had a short in my turn indicator, you know, the blinker, and the thing started gon' into cruise control because everything is housed in that module. We had rigged a wire to go from A to B so I could have headlights, and that would turn on my cruise control, so I lost control of my van and flipped it.

RRP: Did you get injured when you flipped it?

WH: Hell yeah I got injured. I broke my tailbone.

RRP: So you're in the Country Music Hall Of Fame?

WH: I'm in there. I not quite sure how I pulled that one off, but I did pull it off. Somebody told me I was in the Hall of Fame, and I was like "no I'm not," and he showed me. It was even in the book; I'm a Hall of Famer, man. [laughs]

RRP: Have you ever gone there to check it out?



Photos: Lisa Donnalley

WH: I've never seen it. I'm not one of those guys who has to go over his own press. It sort of almost embarrasses me. I'm not really old enough to be in there, you know. At least not to my knowledge.

RRP: So what old-timers do you like?

WH: Of course I was into Hank Williams. I like Frank Sinatra and all those Big Band guys.

RRP: How do you feel getting a strong endorsement from Hank III, who covers some of your songs?

WH: It's great. He's one of my best friends; we're pretty tight.

RRP: In other interviews you've stressed that you didn't get into music to make a million bucks, that you're more driven by a sense of integrity...

WH: [laughs] Well, it's a good thing too, because there ain't a million bucks [to be made in this music].

RRP: Do you ever get discouraged, like when you're on the road barely makin' it: lonely, broke, and tired?

WH: All the time. This tour is no different, man. This tour is down to the wire too. A lot of it is record company, the economy, and stuff like that. You see, I'm not really their pick to be the winner because I do what I wanna do; nobody tells me nothin'. I'm deemed snakebit and unmanageable (although I do have a manager now, I picked him myself - he's one of my best friends). I'm not really interested in how it all works [the music industry], and getting in the game to be a big radio star. I think the game is kind of over with, and if you're as good as you think you are, maybe you'll get there anyway, right? It doesn't really matter because all my fans don't listen to the radio, so it's not actually that bad a thing, not being played on the radio.

RRP: Except where I grew in sort of rural Ohio, people think of country music as mainly Ford truck commercials. They have no connection to artists like yourself that

they'd probably love if K-105 actually played real country music.

WH: Except now there's satellite radio. They got the Rebel Radio, or whatever it is. I'm all over Rebel Radio. It's just a weird world. It's a cool time to be alive right now to be doin' music, but it's very uncertain I would think for anybody who was in that part of the business.

RRP: Do you even think that if you ever did become a big star that you wouldn't be able to write the way you do? Can someone write a good country song when they are living an easy life, eatin' caviar off the breasts of supermodels?

WH: Well, if you've been down that road before, you never forget it. And if you've been down that road and you walked it, you're never gonna be that way because that's a myth, brother. All that stuff, it's not real. The only guys who get into that business are the ones who can't make it here on the outside - that's where they go. If you got the kind of mentality to do that, and it's just me sayin' this, if you've got that kind of mentality then you could never be like me anyway. I'm like this, brother, because I got burned so many fuckin' times that I finally just flipped out and went over the edge and said fuck it, I don't care anymore. I'll play anyway. That's different. Now watch me get famous anyway... that'll fuck everything up. [laughs]

RRP: I read somewhere that you were doing a video from your tour of the Northeast, is that true?

WH: Yeah, in fact the video has already been cut. It almost didn't happen. I didn't like the sons of bitches, and I didn't like the way they was treatin' me and my guys. We were supposed to do this thing at a club in Duluth, where these guys are convinced that nobody knows us. These guys are fuckin' idiots, you know what I mean? It's just this total lack of knowledge. My record company even thinks I'm not well-known out east, and I'm like "are you kidding me? I've been out here for years." My problem is not filling dancehalls, my problem is getting dancehalls big enough to take the crowds so they have enough room to dance. The production company was the same way. I told that guy up there in Duluth, I was like "these streets look really familiar." Well, I used to play up there all the time, you know. So we took a gig which otherwise wouldn't have paid no money for anybody except for them, and it turned into a \$1500 venture for me. But if I let those guys do what they wanted to, I'd have no money or nothin' and would've still had to go on tour. So, it's really a dog-eat-dog situation out here.

RRP: What is the video of?

WH: It's for Thunderstorms and Neon Signs. I told the guy all I wanted was motels and driving and rain. That's ALL I want. That song is only about what I say it's about. I don't want no cute kids and their daddies. I don't give a shit about that. All I want is the song portrayed the way I want it, and if it's not gonna be portrayed, then I ain't gonna fuckin' do it. Besides that, they were payin' for it. It was free. Every time I say somethin' it happens to me. I told the press I'll do a video when they pay for it. Well, six weeks later these guys jump up.

RRP: So how did it end up? Have you seen the final cut?

WH: I haven't seen the final cut, but I liked what I saw. Like I said man, I'm a son of a bitch for sittin' there and doin' that kind of stuff. To me, if you've gotta have pictures with your music, then maybe you're listenin' to it wrong. It's a real simple thing, you don't need pictures to understand it.

RRP: People need a certain image to latch on to...

WH: Yeah, the guy was sayin' the "younger generation" might like the... well fuck the younger

generation. I AM the younger generation, okay? MTV and CMJ and all that stuff, it all went commercial on us. The music's still there after all that goes away.

RRP: That's kind of leads in to what I was gonna ask about the "retro" scene and the trendy, image conscious aspect of it.

WH: I do hate that word too. I don't know much about it; I'm not much a part of it. Hell, callin' somethin' retro is the same thing as using a racial epithet to me. It's almost means that you really don't know what you are talkin' about. Retro would be the style, but I wouldn't call the music retro. If people are looking for the kind of music which they used to adhere to their hearts, wouldn't that be going forward perhaps? Because retro to me is 70's, 80's, 90's country. That's retro. We've already been there. I don't want to go back there. The stuff that I play hasn't been allowed on the radio for many years because I don't have drums. It used to be in the 40's if you HAD drums you couldn't play on the radio, then it switched.

RRP: So why do you prefer to not have a drummer?



WH: Just don't need one.

RRP: You had a drummer at one time, didn't you?

WH: I did for a while, but it was only for certain things that I wanted. I was using some horns and stuff and a six-piece band on a couple of my cuts, and I had some guest drummers. But if you've got a beat, if you've got the rhythm, you've got a doghouse bass, and you got this guy bangin' on a guitar, then the drums are there. They're as percussive as a drum. I'm not against the drums at all, but there's too many cats out there doing the drums. I've found favor in this kind of music, so I stayed with it. When I DO use drums, the motherfucker better be bad. I mean super-bad like Buddy Rich or Gene Krupa, because if he ain't, then I'm gonna make him look bad. If you come up on my stage, we play. If you can't play, get off of my stage. I'm an asshole about that, but that's the way it is. People pay money to see a show. They're not paying to see us stand up there and fuck around and not get a damn song right. They won't be entertained, and we're here to entertain you.

RRP: So what's the longest time it has ever taken you to record an album?

WH: Probably three days was the longest I ever spent

recording an album, but that was my first one. I never had recorded in my life. I did three six-hour shifts, so about 18 hours... not even a day.

RRP: So it is basically just live in the studio.

WH: Right. You just go in there, everybody plugs in and records. Then we go back and fix stuff because you've got about 5 or 10 minutes between takes. Sometimes guys want to diddle around and do different things, but I don't like to spend more than a half-hour working on a song. It is a waste of my time and theirs.

RRP: So a lot of the soloing is just off the cuff, just like every night on the road?

WH: Pretty much.

RRP: With your studio stuff being pretty close to live, why did you decide to go ahead and put out a live album? What is different between live in the studio and live on-stage?

WH: Well, because the audience is part of the equation. You have music, that's just part of it too. You have the audience and us: that's a triangle. We play music and send it out to you. You react and throw it back at us, and it goes back and forth as pure energy. In the studio you get no feedback. Plus, if you know it's live, you know that guy played that solo. He didn't go over here and punch it in note by note like these jackasses do in these studios. You know it's real. Even a lot of the so-called "live" albums these bands put are all fixed up in the studio. That's why I'm not involved in the studio, brother, it's all bullshit. If their live albums are bullshit, what's that tell you about the rest of it? I tried to tell those guys about this shit [speaking about a popular band, whose name had to be omitted]. They just blew it off. They ain't gonna listen to me. What do I know? As far as they're concerned I'm just some guy who couldn't handle the big time. He's over here. I can handle the big time; I've been doing this for 25 years now. I was on the radio when I was a kid. The big time's always been out there, but it's just a big fuck time. Nobody needs that shit.

RRP: How old were you when you started in music?

WH: 14. I wasn't gonna do it for a living, man. I was just gonna do it for fun, then it just became my livin'. I started making more on the weekend than I was making on the weekdays.

RRP: I read that you're a non-practicing alcoholic. Has giving up the drink helped you to survive longer on the road?

WH: Certainly helps. [laughs] I do like smoking my reefer.

RRP: So why did you quit drinking?

WH: I got a real problem with it, man. I like doing everything in excess. You can't smoke in excess, though, you just smoke up all your weed and you got nothin' the next day. You can drink enough to kill yourself, but can't smoke that much. It might take you over 40 years if you wanna do it like that, but you ain't gonna do it overnight. At least I've never known of anyone OD-ing. I have to have it, man, because AA wasn't working for me. A lot of guys'd be coming out there bitchin' about not being able to drink and I was like "I don't want to hear about this," you know. I am trying to stay sober and these people come in whining about the fact that their doctor gave them whatever the hell pill it was he gave them.

RRP: You're in bars every night, though. Is that pretty tough?

WH: Doesn't even phase me. As long as I got my left hand and Lucky's, I'm alright. I can hit that cigarette and it makes my shaking go away. It does for me what nothing else did. I was on Depakote, Zoloft and all that shit for years and years trying to get out of it because I'm manic. A hundred miles an hour or



nothing. Finally I started medicating with weed. Works for me. I've been accused of cocaine and herion and it's like, man, [laughs] show me the tracks on my fucking arms. I don't do that. I certainly tried my share of shit, brother, but I don't understand how you can do cocaine on a daily basis and do this for a living... let alone herion. You gotta have a pretty fucked up job to be able to come do your job like that.

RRP: I read that you were also on *Prairie Home Companion*. How was that?

WH: That was a long time ago... I want to say '98. Maybe '99. Shit, I can't remember it was so long ago. I was interesting. Garrison Keiler comes out and just starts calling parts, just like I do, and everybody starts freaking out. He liked us a lot. I thought it was a lot of fun.

RRP: I also read somewhere that you have some sort of rivalry with Junior Brown.

WH: I got no rivalry with that guy. That guy thinks he's the best, and I AM the best. [awkward pause] Just kidding! [laughs] I'm really not the best... couldn't say that without laughin' about it. It's a really asinine thing to say to somebody. I told [Hank] Three to tell that to Kid Rock one time. Now, I never met the guy, but he certainly looks like he could be bad about that. That's all he brags about: how much money he made and how much money he made. First of all, you ain't the fuckin' best, and you ain't the richest either. That star can come down as fast as it went up, man, especially out here. I'll tell you what, I do like his singin' a lot better now than what he was doin', though.

RRP: What was he doing before?

WH: Horrible, horrible rap or hip hop or whatever. I wish him the best of luck. [shrugs] Yeah, Three

doesn't like him; I found that kind of interesting. It's too bad; I thought maybe he'd be all right. All that money went to his head, not Three, the other kid. Three's cool.

RRP: Yeah, it seems a lot of performers are more concerned with making cash and patting their own backs than making the music that means anything.

WH: No shit. All you gotta do is come close to not being around this world a few times and that shit, you get over it. I got real sick last year and damn near died on the road.

RRP: I remember that. You had to cancel your Cleveland show. What happened?

WH: I got a staph infection. I believe it started from a spider bite or something happened here on my thumb. I went the doctor the next day and he said "oh that's a staph infection" and gave me antibiotics, and of course those didn't kill it. A week later while we were in Virginia I started having hallucinations. I'd hear my father talkin' to me, and my father has been gone for years. My father told me one night when I was asleep to get up and go to the hospital. Well, when you wake up in the morning and you're that foggy that you dreamt of your dead father tellin' you to go to the hospital, you don't fuck around: you go to the hospital! [laughs] So, I get to the hospital, and I must've been pretty close because first of all: they took me on a Sunday. That's number one. You gotta be in critical condition for them to take you on a Sunday. Number two: I was embarrassed about everything that I had done, and thought I hadn't done enough. That's how I knew I was a goner: I started thinking about all the shit I'd done, and man, I hadn't done very much.

RRP: What were you thinking you still wanted to do?

WH: Well, I really didn't give a shit about it after a point. First of all, my record company was calling me up while I was in critical condition, wanting me to do a free fucking show in New York City. You know, calling up my surgeon while I have a breather thing attached to me and all those heart things, and I had a priest in my room asking me if I want to make out my last will. Fuck that shit. It was a bad deal, brother; it was really close. So at that point I really didn't give a shit. I put a lot of hard work into getting' here, and I had been out for exactly ten years at that time, so I figured it was a good end to a good story. I didn't really care if I died or not. I was just tired. Then I started getting all these e-mails from people. I had a stack of e-mails an inch thick, and that helped me get turned around. But I figured right then if I ever lived through this, I wouldn't want to do it for money any more. Money's important, don't get me wrong, you gotta live, but Christ Almighty, after that all I wanted to do was pay my bills, pay my band, and keep my head above water. I make more than enough to keep my head above water when I make it, but there are days when you don't always make it. I had to pay a ten thousand dollar thing to the IRS just last month... back taxes from a bad booking agent, man.

RRP: Damn. Well, that's all the questions I have right now. Is there anything else that you want to put out there?

WH: Just that I ain't ever givin' up. Anybody who don't like me can fuck themselves. I don't know if you want to write that.

RRP: Oh yeah, I'm gonna use that.

Find more info and tour dates at:
www.waynehancock.com

I don't know what it is that makes Al Foul seem so anachronistic in this day and age. He's just the furthest thing you can imagine from a cell phone yapping Myspace addict. He's a natural storyteller, a boisterous personality, and his music is a direct extension of the kind of life he lives. He grew up in Boston where he was in the "drunk punk" band, The Foul Mouthed Elves. Although that band went by the wayside 15 years ago, he has kept the surname... and kept on drinking. He is actually one of the most accomplished drinkers I have ever met: the sort who prefers the desperate, smoke-filled air of a dive bar without pretense to any swanky hipster hovel. That said, he'll play anywhere for anyone, and typically wins over any kind of crowd with his ample wit and wry humor. Once while staying at my apartment in Ohio, he went downstairs to an open-mic night at a coffee shop, played a few songs, sold a few CDs, then came back upstairs and polished off another bottle of wine. He's the voice of the societal outsider, whose friends range from hard luck transients and junkies to reclusive world-renowned artists, and everything in between. After hitchhiking with Piggy (his future washtub bass player) from Boston and eventually ending up in Tucson in 1991, Al began gaining notoriety playing wild shows as Al Foul & The Shakes. A couple years back he started doing gigs as a one-man band, and since then has done solo tours as far away as France. The following is a phone interview I did in August 2006 with a great musician, and also one of my good friends. For more information, visit rocknrollpurgatory.com and read an older interview I did with him in 2003. - Ben

Al Foul

www.alfoul.net



RRP: What is the bass player curse that has always affected the Shakes? Was the decision to go with a one-man band in any way related to that?

Al: Ah yeah, the bass player curse. Well, you know, I am trying to remember exactly where it started. It's almost like every bass player has to come to some kind of really bad injury. There's only a couple that haven't. No, no, there's only one who hasn't. That's, knock on wood, Naim Amor, but he's really a guitar player. He just played electric bass for a short little tour in France. He says that he has lifted the curse, but I say he's a guitar player so he has nothing to do with the curse. But, well, let's see... Piggy always just had bad luck. He had broken his neck when he was younger. It had nothing to do with the band; this was before he was playing music. Then he started playing with me, and that is really where the curse started. This old bass player for the Foul Mouthed Elves came into town, Jeff, and he and Piggy went out for a motorcycle ride with a bottle of tequila, which is never a very good idea. On the way back he was having trouble with his motorcycle. I don't think it was the drunk driving or anything - his motorcycle kept having this thing where the throttle would stick open. And well, I don't know how buzzed he was. He said he really wasn't that buzzed, but they were driving and at the end of this street there was a cross street where it stopped and you could go either left or right. He was coming into that at a good clip and his throttle got stuck open and he goes "aw fuck" and couldn't get it to stop. So he laid the bike down on the side figuring "well, it'll just slide out" and they'll be alright, but when it hit the ground, the bike started to spin. The bass player on the back from the Elves cracked his head into a signpost. Pretty much fuckin' cut the signpost in half with his head and he got crippled from it. He still don't walk to this day. Piggy, at the same time, his leg just kind of folded right at the shin. It broke completely and folded to the side a little bit.

That was a real bad break. He had to get something like, oh shit, like a dozen pins and a dozen plates, and all this other stuff. It took a long time to heal. So that's where it started: two bass players at once. But I didn't really consider it a curse at the time, until Shannon Marino was playing with me and he got onto a motorcycle. He was a big motorcycle enthusiast; he's a biker now. I guess he always was. He was driving [wrecked his bike] and he actually broke his fucking neck. The other guy that was with him - this is really funny - Kevin Daily was with him... he plays in Grave Danger. They were both driving together, and they were buzzed out in this canyon in the middle of nowhere. They ended up getting helivaced out of there. Some Parks/Recs guy just happened to be in the area and saw them. They had cell phones, but no cell phone would work in this area, so this guy had a walkie-talkie and he called it in and they got helivaced out because he had a broken neck. Kevin, what happened to him is he hit the ground on a separate motorcycle. I think he was gonna turn around to go back and help Shannon and somehow... boom... his bike went down and he landed on his side really hard. Bam! The whole side of his body was this giant black and blue mark, and about a week or so after the accident, he tells me all the blood from all the busted blood vessels just kinda settled down and filled up his nutsack. His nuts turned into this giant black and blue sack. Oh god, the poor bastard, you know. But he was alright, he got through it, and Shannon, his necked healed up and he's still playing to this day and everything's good. So at that point, I'm starting to think there's a curse, you know. Then Rick Tanner starts playing with us. He's now playing with Demented Are Go, I think, and for a long time he played with the Hellbillys. He was playing with us and I mentioned to him that there might be a little bit of a curse, and I think he was a little superstitious too, but he didn't really pay any heed to that until one night when we were in the middle of a tour. We had gone up the

West Coast, and now we were gonna go across the South and do the rest of the country. So we were stopping back in Tucson and playing some gigs. We were playing at the Grille actually, and he had put this cage together up in L.A. to lock up the equipment because the van didn't lock. This cage was made out of angle iron and this very thick metal grate. It's underneath this bed that was above it, and the thing fills the whole back of the van. Well, when you put up the back of the angle iron grate, you had to just prop it up on the doors. We had no other way to hold it up. So he was loading all this other stuff while we were still inside the bar, and as he's loading his bass cabinet, and it was a big monster cabinet. He hits one of the doors with his elbow while he is doing it and the grate comes whipping down, just misses his head, but his thumb is right on top of the amp and the angle iron goes bump and pretty much cuts his thumb off. There was just this tiny piece of skin holding it on, so he comes quickly into the bar to find me and goes "umm, you gotta take me to the hospital, I just cut my thumb off." I go, "ahh, no you didn't, let me look at it....Oh shit!" So after that he was totally convinced it was the fucking curse, and it was moving on. Then after Rick was done I had two tours with a guy I knew from back east. His name was Doug Smith. He was gonna play electric bass, and he was a guitar player. That's why I tell Naim he should look out. Before the tour, right when I first asked him, I was like "hey man would you like to get together, maybe play a little electric bass with me or something?" He was like "yeah, sure." We were kind of hanging out... drinking buddies at the time. I think we practiced maybe once or twice together and we

had some shows lined up. So he went out late one night after we practiced to this pool behind this school down in the barrio with some friends. You kinda jump the fence and go in there and swim and it's real nice. It's kind of a customary thing for people in the neighborhood to do. Well, you know, he's got some chicks with him, he's been drinking all day, and he's gonna show off a little bit. So, he jumps the fence, runs over and dives right into the shallow end. Smacked his head on the bottom of the pool. I wasn't there, but from what the chicks were telling me the pool was filling up with blood. I mean it was really fucked up, man. He ended up having to go to the hospital and they told him if he had hit one half an inch further up on his head, he would've just completely busted his neck and he'd be dead right now. He was really on edge for the whole rest of that tour, but he didn't get hurt again. So far though, I've had Juan playing with me and ain't nothin' happened to Juan, but he's only been playing with me for a short time. Hopefully the curse is lifted. Maybe Naim's right.

RRP: Didn't something happen to Eric from the Last Call Brawlers when he was playing bass for you?

Al: Oh yeah! Eric too. Eric was playing bass for a little while in between Rick and Doug Smith. Eric was another one who would not heed the curse, and he got onto a motorcycle. At the time his dad owned a motorcycle shop, and he got on this old Triumph. He was driving around off in the desert on this windy road and think it was the exact same thing as happened to Piggy: the fucking throttle stuck. He went right off the road, into the desert, into a giant pile of cactus, then the motorcycle flies on top of him. He can't move it and the big exhaust pipe on it, which was red hot because he had been really haulin' ass, it just lands on top of him and burns one of his titties just about off. I thought for a long time that he no longer had a nipple and I was telling

people that, but he says he still has a nipple. But he does have a wicked scar. They had to graft some skin from somewhere else, the inner thigh or something like that, and put it on his chest.

RRP: How often to you play with the Shakes these days?

AI: I have been doing a lot of gigs with the Shakes lately. Over the last few months about half of them have been with the Shakes. I have been doing the Shakes sometimes as a trio, but a lot of the gigs are with Naim Amor on lead guitar, I'll be playing my Kay acoustic through an amp, Juan on bass, and Lucas on drums. That's what I like actually: having a good lead guitar player so I can just play the rhythm and sing.

RRP: How do you know Naim?

AI: I met him years ago here in town. He's been here a long time. He used to have this band with this other guy when he first came to town called the Amor Belhom Duo, and they'd play around. I wasn't a huge fan of their music, but I ended up meeting him in some little bar/café thing and just got into a conversation with him. He told me he used to play in some band that used to do Rockabilly kind of stuff, some Cajun stuff, and some other stuff. We started to talk more and had a lot of the same interests. We've known each other for 8 to 10 years maybe, but we didn't start hanging out or doing any recording together until just a few years ago.

RRP: So do you know what Piggy is up to these days?

AI: I hear he is in New York. A woman I know from Tucson was out there and ran into him. They were playing in this squat. He plays wustub bass, and I think this other guy I know, Morgan, is playing the banjo. I'm not sure, though. The way she described it was it's a kind of psycho jug band, which is perfect for him. Perfect. I'm sure they're great. But we don't really talk too much. Maybe it's part of the curse, I don't know.

RRP: Isn't Piggy the one who had that weird experience in the trailer park?

AI: Oh god, you mean the story of his Indian Princess. Yeah, well, he probably won't like me telling this story but I guess I can tell you. You see, I had heard it kind of secondhand through this guy called Dumpy that was with him. Then I heard a different version through Pigpen himself. It's a really funny story, you know, and it kind of tells you something about this guy's dynamic personality. Him and Dumpy are traveling all around the country, and they go all around Mexico and into Central America, hitchhiking and hopping trains. In my file cabinet I can pull out a 15-page article in Esquire Magazine following Dumpy around the country hopping trains back in the 90's. He's a real man; he's been everywhere in the world. Last time I talked to him he was in Burma, but he always shows up at my door. But anyway, Pigpen and Dumpy had been traveling for quite a while, and at one point they were in Oklahoma, I think. They jumped off at this train stop, and on the other side of the chain link fence by the tracks as they were walking down was this family of Native Americans hanging out in a trailer. They saw they were traveling and were like "hey, you guys wanna have a cold beer?" "Oh sure," Piggy says, of course, but Dumpy at the time didn't drink. So they go over and are drinking some Natural Ice and having a good time. And it goes on... Shit, they end up drinking all day and all night with these guys. The head mama of the trailer there, from what was described to me, was a rather heavy-set woman. It seemed like she had a serious problem with alcohol and something like 4 or 5 kids living in the trailer with her. There were a couple of uncles there too, and they're all getting wasted. Piggy almost gets into

a fight with one of them. But the party carries on and, well... Piggy starts to get that romantic feeling, and so does she, and they start to cozy up. Pretty soon they go off into the bedroom and Piggy, from what he said, he was in love and had finally found his "Indian Princess." And well, you see, a few weeks before this he had picked up an I.D. card in Salt Lake City. Not a really a State I.D., not really a Welfare I.D., but it was actually recognized as a real thing. It was kind of a fluke in hobo history that they'd get these cards. Of course he doesn't use his real name; it's under the name Mark Pitts. So these people all know him as Mark - Mark Pitts - and he probably made up a story to go along with it. So he's in there making love to his Indian Princess, and all the sudden the door busts open. He jumps up and looks over and there's all of her little kids just standing there. Then one of them screams, "Ahhhhhhhh! Mommy's fucking a bum!!!" And Piggy's just thinkin' "Oh no!" Then his Indian Princess goes "you kids! You get in here and you apologize to Mark!" Piggy later tells me: "I don't think I ever felt so alone in my life." [laughs] I don't think he ever told her what his real name was, and he was gone in the morning. Yeah, Piggy's got a million great stories. He's a person to interview just on his own. Just all the traveling he's done: he's been in some strange situations, and he can tell a story like nobody else. He's hilarious.

RRP: So what made you move out to Mammoth, Arizona?

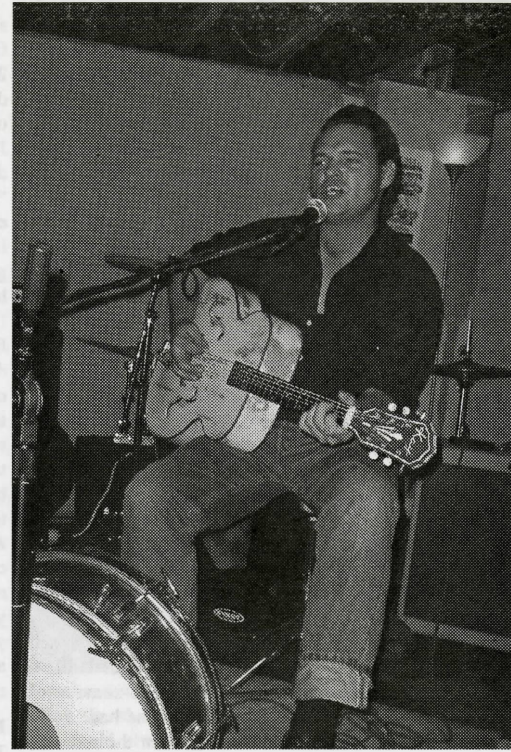
AI: Really, just because I had a few bucks that I inherited and it wasn't enough to put a down-payment on a place in Tucson with the housing boom there. I was looking at first for a little place to put my Airstream on, and you can get cheaper land in almost any direction away of Tucson if you get far enough out. I figured I'd go up to the North because if you go out East and towards the South you end up in areas where it's a corridor for illegal aliens and drugs and it gets kind of weird. You get up here, though, and it's maybe a few degrees cooler and a real pretty drive. I was just looking around on the computer and on a whim saw a few properties. Then I happened to see this old bar when we were looking at different properties, and the lady tells me that it goes for sale on and off. The owner's been trying to sell it for 10 years. It's not on the market right now, but he's always looking to sell it and she doesn't think he wants much. So we went and took a look at it. It was a trashed, old adobe building built in the late teens maybe. Maybe the 20's. It was really messed up, seen a lot of wear, been flooded before because of the river. We thought about it for a little while and looked at some other places, then we decided it was the best deal we could find. It came with the bar and dancehall, it had the two little houses behind it, and it was all as cheap as what a down-payment would have cost me for a house in Tucson because it so much further out in a mining community where the mines are all gone now. It's kind of an impoverished little area, so things are real cheap. So that's what brought me out here. It just fell in my lap... a place to put my money before I just spent it living in Tucson.

RRP: What's the population there in Mammoth?

AI: I think it's roughly around 1500 people.

RRP: What did they used to mine there?

AI: Well, there's a mine right up the hill that was called the Tiger Mine. They mined a mixture of things. It started off gold and silver, but then they also found copper and whatever that stuff is they use to harden steel. I think it's beryllium or something like that. Mainly, though, I would say gold, silver, and copper. I think the first mine here was the Mammoth mine. This guy Jack Schultz was a German guy who discovered the copper vein up here



and thought it was a mammoth vein of ore, so that's why the town is named that. That was back in 1876. He's actually buried in the old graveyard up at the top of the hill.

RRP: So the bar you bought used to be a place where the miners used to go and see bands?

AI: Yeah, it was named Kelly's Café in the 30's. Then some time in the late 30's or 40's it was turned into The Blue Front, which the sign is still out front. They remodeled it in '48, and that might have been when they added the dancehall. Then in '54 the owner's son, Louie Cantino Jr., took it over when he got back from the Korean War and turned it into a VFW Hall for all the vets around here, which was a pretty good amount of guys. Then it ran for a long time until they closed down around 1997 or so. That's right about the time the mines were being shut down too.

RRP: When you lived in Tucson didn't you used to have someone living underneath your porch?

AI: I've had all kinds of people... you see, what it was is I moved in there about 12 years ago on 3rd Avenue... 3rd and 9th Street. On 9th Street you had the Buffet Bar, which was the seedy bar of downtown Tucson. It was the one that had the same barflies that have been there for years. Every once in a while you'd see an ambulance out in front of the place taking one of them out for his last rights. It really has that kind of bar feeling and you see people who have been there forever. The place just smells like an old bar. It's filthy, it stinks, and you can always find a sack of weed there. If the right couple of old ladies were around you could probably get jerked off right there at the bar. But I don't know, I never tested that theory. It's a great little place, though, and it has a nice neighborhood feel to it also. I really liked it. In that whole area there, though, you also get a whole lot of transients coming through downtown. There's a cheap market where you can get your 40s and walk down towards the wash or go over to the railroad tracks. Downtown Tucson is kind of known for getting a lot of transients, especially in the wintertime because the climate is nice. Now they have all this new security that the Merchant Associations have, and they've been pushing people out of the area, so they've been going on to other places. But when I moved in there

I knew a lot of people who were on the street too, and I knew a lot of guys who had super serious drug problems. I had a place and most of them didn't, so I had some couches on the front porch and certain guys would ask me for my permission to crash there and I'd let 'em. Sometimes somebody would start to stay too long and I'd have to tell them: hey, you gotta get the fuck outta here, man. And they would. They'd fuck off, and it was no big deal. But I didn't realize the magnitude of how many people were actually staying there, even sometimes when I'd be out of town. I've met guys who are now recovering drug addicts and stuff, and they go, "hey man, I just want to thank you so much, man, for putting me up" and I'm like "who the fuck are you?" "Oh man, you let me live on your porch for 8 months." "What? Let you? I don't even know you man!" They were always friends with this guy or that guy. God. It got different when Maggie moved in and I had a live-in girlfriend. Then I pretty much laid down the law and most of them had to go unless it was some kind of emergency. Then it kind of got into a thing where people just wondering by... I'd come out in the morning and there'd be somebody on the porch. I had to start laying my foot down and pushing some people around and threatening people, getting rid of them like that. Then it got pretty chill for a while. There was that one woman who used to do some yardwork for us every once in a while. She had suffered a broken back. She used to be in the rodeo. I forget exactly what she did, calf-roping or something like that. I guess she was really good at it too, but years ago she suffered a back injury that kind of put her in a bad situation for a long time financially. She couldn't really work. She'd do a little yardwork for us, just trimming some weeds and stuff for \$20 or something. It was more just to help her out. My place was kind of a dive. Pulling a couple weeds wasn't gonna help. I guess for a good six or so months she was living underneath the porch. She was friends with the guy who lived next door to me for a while, a trucker guy who used to be involved with the rodeo about 20 years ago when she was. But yeah, she lived under there. There was always weird shit going on.

RRP: Who lived in the van in your front yard?

AI: The van, that was usually [Terry] Trash or Mitch [ex-bandmates]. The van was kind of their territory. Trash, he tried to lay claim to it. It was almost like his house. He didn't like even Mitch sleeping in it, but Mitch slept in it before him. But, you know, it'd be fun. You'd go out there and see the van rocking and be like what the fuck? I'd shine the flashlight in the window and Terry'd be in there with some young girl... all the fuckin' time. And Mitch too. I guess they run with a great class of women, you know what I mean?

RRP: Didn't you catch someone stealing your cans out of your backyard one time?

AI: Oh yeah... and that's not the only time. You see, what I'd do is... I drink a lot of beer just to begin with. I can fill the yard with beer cans in no time just by myself. But a lot of people would come over after hours, like if there is a band in town that I like, or just met, or had known for a while. They'd always come to my house and drink after the show for several hours. So the backyard gets filled up in one corner, and I take a truckload of them in every few months and get 40 or 50 bucks or something to buy some more beer. But, one morning I am sitting back there... this is the best one, this happened 3 or 4 times... I'm sitting back there in my bedroom, which is kind right by where the cans are, and I hear this crinkle, crinkle, crinkle. I'm like "what the fuck?" This totally wakes me up out of a dead sleep. Crinkle, crinkle. I go, "the fucking cans!" and I jump up. I knew it was some other bum trying to

steal all my cans. At this time, you know, I'm not too far off from where they're at. I probably owed about 2 or 3 months rent at the time, and I'm gonna defend these cans with my life. I jump up and throw on a pair of clothes and start running for the door. Just out of the corner of my eyes as I go through the door I see this dude kinda scurry by, and I was like "fuck that, goddamn!" I looked back and, well, I can't tell if they took any cans or not. The pile looked a little light, and so I get on my bike and I've got this big chain and a bike lock... and I was really hung over, man. I drank a lot the night before... and I got chasing after these motherfuckers. I am gonna find them. I am gonna get back my cans. I go one direction. I go in the other. Finally after a couple of blocks I realize... I guess I started to sober up... I said "wait a minute Al. Wait a minute. You are still really drunk from the night before and you are ready to kill somebody over a couple dollars worth of old beer cans. You have a chain and everything." I said to myself "man, I'm fucking nuts! I'm about to get Assault with a Deadly Weapon or something for a couple dollars worth of cans." I'm glad I came to my senses before I caught the guy. You know when you wake up still drunk like that and something gets you angry... I almost made a huge mistake. For me and for him it would have been terrible. But nobody ever made off with all my cans, though. Never.

RRP: Who was your friend who went with you to Texas and got arrested?

AI: Oh fuck, what happened was... I think we first started going out to Texas in '93, maybe '94. The first time we went out to Texas, what we'd do is try to go out to that South By Southwest [festival]. I'd send in (a submission), I think it was \$10 or something. 10 or 15 dollars. You paid, sent in a tape, a photograph, and a little bio to try and get into the SxSW. Well, we always got denied from it, but I figured, well, there's so many people out there, we'll do what we do at the fairs or the Saturday nights in Tucson. We'll play the streets and have a good time, and maybe we'll get into some kind of gig or something while we're there. We'll stop in El Paso and play at Wild Hare's on the way. We'll play a gig in Tucson before we leave to put a little money in the tank. What ended up happening the first time we go there, we get pulled over because we're real sleepy driving in the morning. An RV kind of passes us real close and almost runs us off the road a little bit. This was right as you come into Junction, Texas, which is just to the western side of Kerrville, where you take the turn-off to Austin. So we swerve a little bit because of that, and the local Junction cops pull us over. We had a little bit of weed on us. The drummer had a little sack, but he thought he'd had it stashed pretty good and he didn't really think anything of it. We thought the cop was maybe gonna give us a little traffic violation, just mess with us, but we had no warrants or anything at the time. Everything was cool. So we just figured we'd talk to them, but these guys, they go through *everything*! They completely tear our car apart. They open up every single bag. They take out the spare tire and bounce it up in the air, listening to it. The one guy would ask the other, "hey man, does this sound weird to you?" They keep bouncing it like there are pounds of drugs or something hidden in there. We had Arizona plates and stuff, so maybe they thought something was suspicious, I don't know. But I know now what it was. It was SxSW. They just get tons of musicians heading there, you know, and they do the same thing [to them] that they did to us. So they find the weed and arrest the drummer. They put him in this little jail in Junction with this historical plaque on the wall that says here in 1890, or something like that, was once held John Wesley Hardin... 's Brother. [laughs] For ten days. Not even John Wesley Hardin. It was his brother on this historical plaque. So our drummer gets taken in and

they sit him down for a minute, then they go "okay, the judge is ready for you now," and they walk him in. "Possession of marijuana, judge, we have it right here." "How do you plead?" asks the judge. He goes, "uh... uh... uh..." Bang! "A thousand dollar fine." And he's like "what?" "A thousand dollar fine or you stay here," they tell him. We really wanted to get to Austin and play, so he ended up calling around and borrowing money from people, and he paid the fine while me and Piggy sat out in front of the jail singing songs, almost like a little protest. We did prison songs and stuff like that: him with the washtub and me with the guitar. So by the end of the day he finally comes up with a grand Western Unioned to him and he gets out. What ends up happening is *every year* after that... we went there 4 more times to SxSW... and every time we'd go through Junction they'd stop us. The next time of course we were real smart and the drummer figured out what the key was. What you do when you have weed is everyone takes his bag of weed and rolls it up into joints. Everyone puts a couple joints in their front pocket so you can just grab 'em. You don't have to go looking around, moving around in your car being suspicious. They are just right there, and it looks like you are grabbing a cigarette. Then you also keep right there on the dashboard some salted, out-of-the-shell, peanuts: the ones that come in the tube. That way, when you get pulled over in Junction everybody just eats their joints. When you put the joint in your mouth you take a mouthful of peanuts, and that helps you to chew it up. If you just try to eat a couple joints, it's just paper and weed, which is really hard to chew and really hard to swallow, but if you have those peanuts you can grind them right up and swallow them right down. It worked out great. The first time, our drummer had most of the joints with him in his pocket. We each had one, but he had like three in his pocket. So after the cops stops us, we all end up eating them, and it was pretty powerful stuff. He goes "hey! You guys again! I remember you from last year... Al Foul and the... the... the Shakers?" I go "no, no, no... the Shakes," and he goes, "oh, alright. Yeah. Yeah. You guys ain't got no dope this time do ya?" "Oh no man, we learned our lesson." He ended up going through the car again and giving us a small hassle, but they didn't have anything on us, so they let us go. At that point the drummer couldn't drive no more because it was starting to hit him and he's getting really stoned. We drive into Austin and it's all cool, and we get back to Tucson just fine. It was all good. But the next year we came through, we got this friend of mine. His name is Toothless Al because of his dental hygiene. He used to live on my porch too. He'd stash beanie weenies and rolling papers all through the couch cushions and stuff for midnight stacks, or if he ran out of paper for his tobacco or anything. He had all kinds of weird stuff stashed in there. You could always tell when he'd been there. At this time he had a Cadillac. It was not registered or insured or anything like that. He was just kind of living in it. It was an old brown, maybe a '79 or '78 Cadillac. Oh, and it stunk, man, from him livin' in it. It had this white leather interior that was all smeared up, all brown and black... just filthy. It smelled like, well, like an old man had been living in it. So we take him with us because we don't have no car at all, so we're gonna drive his Cadillac with no registration, no title, no nothin', but it's the only ride we've got. He says, "I'll drive, don't worry, man, everything will be cool." So we're driving and he's got a little bit of speed and he's got a little bit of weed. We get in a little close to Junction and I say to him: listen man, every year they get us here in Junction. I swear to God they'll get us. They *always* pull us over here no matter what kind of car we're driving... no matter what. So if you've got *anything* on you, man, I'll help you eat it or get rid of it. Just be ready to eat it, and keep it in plain sight so we can

just grab it. He goes, "no, man, it's cool, don't worry. I got it stashed real good." No dude, you don't have it stashed good enough. They will find it. "Don't worry, man. Don't worry." And as soon as we get into Junction [makes siren sound]. Right behind us: there they are. It's the same cop. He goes "Aaaal Foul... and the Shakers!" No man, it's the Shakes. "You all got any dope this time?" I go, "Oh no sir, no sir. No dope with us anymore." "Well, alright, we're just gonna have you step out of the car," and they pile all of us into the cop car. Four of us all together with Toothless Al get stuffed into this backseat with no legroom at all. Just squished in, legs in the air: four grown men. We were just hoping none of us were gonna get a Charlie horse. We were in there for about 20 minutes as they went through the car, and right at the last minute what do they find? Right in the fucking visor they find the smallest piece of speed that you could ever imagine. Nobody should have ever saved it, it was so small: maybe half of a match head. Maybe! And then he had enough weed for maybe half of a bong hit. I mean, you couldn't fill the smallest roach with it, but for them this was a big bust. They got us: speed and weed. I mean, if you tried to run a chemical test on either one of these, there wasn't enough. I couldn't believe that Al left *that*, that he was gonna stash *that*. Why was he even saving it? So they walk back to the car and say to us, "alright, who is smokin' crack?" And Al goes, "Goddamnit! That ain't crack, motherfucker! That's speed!" [laughs] He was totally offended that they'd think he was smoking crack, you know: it's speed goddamnit! So they go, "well, well... you're going to jail with us mister." And we're like, "Oh well." Then they go, "What's up with this Cadillac? You ain't got a registration? Insurance? Do you have a title?" I go, "No man, no we don't have any of that, but we've been drivin' safe." And they thought they got Al and they were gonna get a \$1000, and they had already busted us 3 times before, so they let us go with this totally illegal car. He let us go because we said we had to get to the gig, and he just let us take it. Said to be careful. So we drive down there and throughout the weekend I call back to ask about Al. I ask what's up with his status and they go: "When are you coming back through?" I said, "Well, we'll be coming back through on Monday." They say, "What time?" I don't know, maybe 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning. "We'll leave him at exit 292" (or 252, I can't remember what it was). "He'll be waiting there for you." So I'm like, okay, and we drive through there on Monday and we find Al. He's just standing there right off this exit. He's looking miserable as fuck. We asked him what happened and he says, "Man, last night they dumped me out in the middle of a rainstorm! A torrential rain storm! They just dumped me out here by the highway. I had to stay here all night." He had to steal the cover off a motorcycle to keep warm. He had almost frozen to death because he was only wearing a tank top, shorts, and sandals. He was miserable, man. He was shaking when we got him in the car. I asked him what happened. He said they took him into the jail told him the judge wasn't going to be ready for a while. So the guy that runs the jail, the sheriff or whatever, he has the contract to feed the people who stay in the jail. There's always like 6 or 7 guys staying there, sometimes for months. Local guys busted for fightin' and stuff, or guys waiting to be transferred to another place, or something like that. He's got the contract to feed them, so his wife cooks it all at home. She cooks all this great home-cooked food. So after living in his car, living on my porch, living on the streets for years, he gets in this jail and the first thing they do is give him a meal of homemade fried chicken, homemade cornbread...collard greens. It's like the best meal he's had in probably... I don't know how long. And then they give him the remote control for the television, and they've got cable!

He's flipping through the channels, he's got a greasy leg of fried chicken, and he's in absolute heaven. He loves it! Then they take him in to see the judge. The judge sees him and... bang! One thousand dollars. And Al just laughs at him, and he goes, "ahhh hell, throw me in with the niggers and the spics! I'm here for the loooooo haul! I ain't gonna drop any In God We Trust on your Podunk asses!" And they're just like, uh... uh... and they put him back in his cell. He just puts his feet up and he's watchin' television and he's lovin' it. He's thinking he's gonna stay there and eat really good: probably get really healthy, but man, they just got so mad. They wanted that \$1000 and they were sure they were gonna get it. They do it all the time, but they got this guy who is just like "you are helpin' me, you ain't hurtin' me!" They got so mad about it that instead of dumping him off in the morning and letting us pick him up, they dumped him off in the middle of a cold-ass March rain storm with just those flip-flops and fucking shorts. He was an old man. At the time he was in his mid to late 50's, but had a hard-livin' life. That could have given him the illness of his life, you know, but he's a tough old guy so he made it out just fine.

RRP: The second time you were in France on tour was when the riots were going on, right?

Al: Yeah, there was a bunch rioting going on. We would kind of miss it here and there. When we were in Paris, that stuff happened kind of up in the northern suburbs where it's more of a poor area. It was more of a protest kind of deal. It was some kids got chased into some electrical building by the police and ended up getting electrocuted and dying in there. That kind of set off a lot of anger that people already had. They felt neglected in those poorer suburbs. The cops were harsh on them, if they were around at all, and the neighborhoods had deteriorated. It was an economic thing. It happened in several other cities too. When we were in Normandy or somewhere, we were by the university and a bunch of windows got smashed and cars got burned. Then in Grenoble, there was an 8:00 curfew all throughout the town, and we were worried that was gonna make the show pretty dead, but people still came out and it turned out to be a good show. There was a little bit of rioting the night we were there. Not like riots in the street, but people would set a car on fire here or there, or some people would smash up some windows. Stuff like that.

RRP: Do you remember telling us a story in Pittsburgh about the guy who had the funnel out the window that he used as a bathroom?

Al: Oh shit yeah. This story takes place in a squat in New York. I'm trying to remember. I wanna say 13th street, but I think that was the wrong one. I always get confused because that was another place we used to go. I can't remember the exact street it was, but it's all walled up now. It's still abandoned but they cinder blocked the whole face of it so nobody could get into it. For years, though, it was a squat. A friend of mine from Ohio, Horsehead, he had the top floor for a while: him and a friend of his. They had gotten it so that it was fairly livable, but all the floors below it were mainly all drugs. People selling coke and crack, and heroin. There was an old woman they used to call Grandma Crack because she ran that house and I think a couple others. But below Horsehead's floor was this one crazy guy; they called him Daricle. He was this crazy fucking Puerto Rican guy that was always fucked up on crack. Just a nutty-ass crackhead, always screaming and yelling, smashin' shit and fightin' with his old lady... just makin' a huge scene about every little thing. He had made enemies out of everybody in the whole building because of his prickly ways. And well, there's no plumbing in these buildings, no plumbing at all. There is electricity, but no plumbing. What



Horsehead would do when taking a piss, instead of filling up 40 oz. bottles like most people would do (you could always go into a room like that and see 30-40 bottles of piss in one room) instead of doing that, he hooked up a funnel with a long garden hose. He put the funnel in a boarded-up window and the hose went all the way down to the ground pretty much. So one morning after drinkin' and drinkin' and drinkin' all night, I wake up and I gotta piss... whew, so bad. So bad. So I go over to the funnel, and I gotta tell you, Daricle did have a lot of enemies, but I didn't know what was happening: what people were doing to get back at him. This is how I found out. I start pissin' in this thing, and this is one of those ragin' piss-for-5-minutes kind of pisses... and I'm pissin'... and I'm pissin'... then all of the sudden I hear "AAAAHHHHH!! I hate you motherfucker! You son-of-a-bitch! AAAHHH!! You piss all over my teeth! AAAHH!!" And I'm wondering what the fuck is going on, he's just screamin' and yelling about somebody pissing on his teeth. Then I hear dut-dut-dut-dut-dut. Dut-dut-dut-dut... running up the stairs. Then bang-bang-bang-bang, bangin' on our door. And still, I can't stop pissin'. What had happened is somebody had cut the hose. They had done this before, I guess, the people the floor below cut that hose and had swung it up so it would go right into his room... and his bed was by the window. So when I first woke up to take that piss, the piss just poured into his house, and I must've pissed like a gallon. He's bangin' on the door and screamin' and I'm still pissin'. I can't stop pissin'. So Horsehead gets up and he goes running over to the door with a baseball bat, and he opens up the door and there's Daricle. "You motherfucker! You pissed all over my teeth! I am gonna K-I-I-I-I-LL YOU!" Then he whips out this little .25 automatic and sticks into Horsehead's face, still screaming "I'll kill you, I'll fucking kill you!" and Horsehead goes, "You get that fucking peashooter out of my face you motherfucker!" and he chases him down the stairs with the baseball bat, you know, chases him all the way back to his room and Daricle slams the door. Then he comes running back up because I'm STILL pissing. "AAAAHHH!! You still pissing on my face!! AAAHHH!!" Finally, I'm done pissing and for the rest of the day you could hear this guy screamin' and screamin' about his shit being pissed all over. I just went back to bed.

RRP: So who is Spazz? You've told me some good stories about this guy before.



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streets of New York for a week, and he gets really desperate at one point. I imagine he had a really terrible jones, and he decides he's gonna do an armed robbery. But he's got no gun or knife, and he's not gonna do nothin' like that. So he comes up with the genius idea of getting a stick out of Tompkins Square Park. He gets a hold of this stick and what he figures is: everyone takes their dog to shit in the park, so he goes and finds a big, hard loaf of dog shit. He somehow fastens it to the end of the stick, figuring nobody in their right mind would want to get a wipe by this. He figures if anybody wants to mess with him he'll give them a good wipe like Zorro, you know what I mean? So he runs into this little bodega, and there is this middle-eastern guy there who runs it. Spazz runs in, not even thinking about the broccoli suit because he's been wearing it for a week. This filthy stalk of broccoli runs into this bodega with a turd tied to a stick, "Give me all your fuckin' money, or I'll wipe you with it! I'll fucking wipe you with it!" The guy just looks at him in complete disbelief for second, and then reaches under the counter and picks up a baseball bat. He doesn't even hit him with the baseball bat, he just throws the baseball bat at him and it kind of knocks him back, and Spazz is still goin' "I'll wipe you with it motherfucker!" Then the guy comes runnin' around the

counter and picks up the bat, and at this point the robbery has gone completely awry, so Spazz just goes running down the street... the fastest moving piece of broccoli you ever seen. I think he left the shit-stick there at the scene of the crime for evidence. The guy chased him for several blocks, but he got away. He never got caught. I would have loved to have seen the police report in the paper. He got caught for other stuff, though, breaking into cars and shit. I remember when I first met the guy, he had this big white lab rat that used to live inside the lining of his leather jacket. This thing was huge, I swear to god; like a foot long. Just this giant rat. What he had done was, he had been feeding it raw hamburger for quite some time, and that's why it got really, really big. He would keep it in his jacket, but because he was feeding it hamburger this thing would get hungry and just start chewin' on him, and you'd see him start whappin' himself in the chest. People would think he was crazy, but he was actually just whackin' the rat because it was chewin' on him. I think that's how it ended up dying. I think it really grabbed a hold of him one day and he ended up whackin' it to death inside of his jacket. I'm not sure what happened to Spazz, but I heard a rumormong that he got diagnosed with AIDS last time he was in Rikers. I don't know if that is true or not, but it's sad to say, I can see it happening.

RRP: I remember you having an odd experience with a pug dog once.

AI: I'm not really proud of it, but I'll share the story if you insist. This neighbor of mine that lived in the duplex there on 3rd Street for while, she had a couple of pugs. She had this one little male pug. She actually used to stud it with other pugs, and this dog had an insane sex drive. She would go around the corner to the thrift store everyday and buy it a stuffed animal, and by the end of the day it would have fucked the

stuffing out of the animal. There would be nothing left but the stuffing and a little rag of what used to be the bunny or bear or whatever they had gotten. It was just insane. As soon as you walked into the house it would grab you and start humping your foot. If you reached to grab your beer with your hand, it would grab a hold of your arm and start humping that. The dog was a fuck machine. So one time I go and visit her and was talking to her about something, and I kind of forgot about the dog for minute. I leaned back on the couch while I'm talking to her and this dog just ran up the corner of the couch, grabbed a hold of my head, and started fucking my head with its dick right in my ear, man. Gave me a true wet willie, I swear to god. I grabbed that dog and I fucked it off of me, but what could I do, you know? The dog didn't know what he was doin'.

RRP: How did you end up being employee of the month three times at the Sizzler?

AI: Oh man, that was a long time ago. I was a teenager. I guess I was just a hell of a good dishwashin' man. I really was. The couple of guys who worked there that managed the place were kind of strange guys. Two of the managers were recovering drug addicts. One of them was on work release, and the other one was just kind of recovered. He was notorious for hanging with this one group of cokeheads years ago, and they used to do all kinds of crazy shit around town. Another guy was an alcoholic out of South Dakota. They used to call him the Hunchback of South Dakota because was driving drunk and he hit this big wall by a mountain and shattered his hip. There was always a big joke that he hit a mountain; that he was so drunk he couldn't avoid the mountain. But he shattered his hip, so that gave him this weird walk where he kind of hobbled, hunched over in a way. On top of that, another time he was drunk and mowing his lawn with a riding mower up on a hill and got stuck on this little branch or something. So he jumped off and yanked it out, and the lawnmower landed right on his foot and cut off his big toe. So now the opposite toe was missing too, so it gave him this weird kind Quasimodo walk. It was because of guys like that working there that they needed a dishwasher that could really hustle when it was crowded. Say they had the Jehovah's Witnesses at the convention center next door and a rib special goin' on or something; I could keep up. It was no problem. Those guys would see I was busy, so every once in a while they'd bring me back a pitcher of beer to keep me goin' so I wouldn't take a break. It was pretty much a relaxed atmosphere. I was really young, 17, 18, or 19. I was drunk pretty much the whole time I was there, but I was just washin' dishes.

AI: He is a weird guy who spent a lot of his life living on the streets. He was pretty much on the streets when I met him when I was maybe 14 or something. He was on the streets then. Sometimes he'd get a girlfriend and he'd have a little place for a while, but he had a lot of problems. He had a strange, almost yodeling way of talking. Very skinny, very malnourished... had an almost Nosferatu kind of look. He used to spray paint his Mohawk with silver or gold spray paint. He never really masked it off, so it would take a while for it to wear off the rest of his head. It always ended up turning into some sort of nasty-lookin' space-witch haircut or something. He was just a strange guy. He also had that kind of skin disease that made him look scaly on his arms and hands and stuff. He was just a very odd, strange guy, and he used to pal around with us. We had known him for years. A pretty hardcore drinker. He was into heroin a lot, and probably any drug he could get his hands on. He ended up at one point getting really, really strung out living on the streets of New York, going in and out of Rikers for stealing and stuff to keep his habit going. But he was kind of part of our crew, you know: The Foul-Mouthed Elves. He used to drink with us and hang out, sometimes the butt of the jokes, but usually a pretty alright guy.

RRP: The story I heard about him involved the robbery...

AI: At that point he was livin' on the streets by this Chinese food restaurant on 2nd Avenue or somethin'. He just like slept there in a sleeping bag and copped dope for other people and would do shit like that. I've heard this story a couple different ways. There is this guy named Keith from Boston who now lives up in Seattle and owns a bar with one of the guys from Soundgarden who tells this story the very best, and I think he was in New York at the time when it happened. He told me the story, and I'll try and interpret it. What it was, Spazz had gotten a hold of this broccoli outfit. Somebody had dug it out of a dumpster behind this soup and salad place. It was for advertising in front of the place, like you dress up as a stalk of broccoli and hold those little signs with their specials. Well, he gets a hold of this dirty old broccoli suit, and it looks kind of like a Gumby outfit with the big head of the broccoli at the top. He thinks it's great. He's walkin' around like a really ghetto, nasty stalk of broccoli through the



RRP: Was that in Boston?

AI: No, that was Tucson. It was one of the first jobs I got when I moved here, so I must've been 18. I only worked there for about a year and a half. I remember I was 19 when I started landscaping and stuff back then. I even got Pighen and Horsehead to work there, actually. For a real short time it was just the three of us back in the kitchen, and all the waitresses were totally creeped out by all of us. The other two guys had dreadlocks and shit: we were all kind of scummy. Whenever they'd bring back a half empty carafe of wine we'd be arguing about who was gonna get it first. The kind of people who go to a Sizzler are not the kind of people who are gonna drink wine. If they order a carafe of wine, it's only because they are gonna have a little glass with their dinner, but most of them hardly even drink it. So every time a carafe came back it was almost full, and I was just like, boomp, and I fucking snagged it up. I was drunk the whole time. It was fun. One time they actually gave all three of us Employee of the Month because they didn't want to just give it to me again: that's what they told me. I told that to Horsehead and Piggy and they were like, "fuck you, Al." Like I was lying. It was funny. They had a cook, this alcoholic son of a bitch with this mustache that connected all the way with his sideburns, really big and bushy. Whenever things got really busy he'd need to drink really bad, and they would bring him pitchers of beer and he'd drink them while he worked. Then when I got in there, I'd be acting all desperate myself so they'd give me beer too. I'd be getting all fucked up and have these carafes of wine. I used to rock that place. I fucking loved it; it was so much fun. We used to do split shifts, and that guy who was the cook told me that at I-10 and Congress St. where the Sizzler was, back behind it there was this drainage ditch that comes from underneath the convention center. He told me to go back there during my split shifts. I'd got back there after I bought a 12-pack at the Circle K that was there, and man, that guy had stacks of newspapers and magazines, some fuckin' milk crates, and I would just kick it back there and drink, and he would do it too on his shifts. I'll tell you, I was so fucking drunk doing that job. A job like that... you know, if you're building something for somebody or you're fixing something for somebody, then you stay sober and you do your job good. If you're working in a restaurant or something, you still do your job good, but you know, it didn't really matter if I was fucked up. Dirty Burt got me that job, dude. Dirty Burt now lives in a fucking mansion in Las Vegas. I swear to god, he lives in a mansion and he got me a job at the fucking Sizzler. He's doing the Blue Man group and shit now.

RRP: I also remember you telling me about scaring people at the old folks home near where you grew up...

AI: Oh yeah, that was when we were little kids. When we were really little kids there was this big building that used to be the Allis-Chalmers factory. They were a big company that had these two huge adjoining factories right near my house. They were abandoned at the time, and this guy from my street ended up setting the place on fire. It was one of the biggest arson cases at that time because it was such a giant fire. But when that place burned to the ground there was this level field where the carnival used to come into town once a year and set up. It was the high point of our summer vacation. Our whole year was spent waiting for it around the 4th of July. It was the biggest thing in our lives when we were little kids. We loved it. What happened, though, was the property got bought. And what did they build? They built a giant old age home and a fucking McDonald's on this lot. It was war after that. That pretty much ruined our childhood as far as we were concerned, so we declared war on the old age home and we declared war on McDonald's. We were bored kids, so whatever we could do we would use it... any kind of vandalism or any kind of terrorism we could think of. We were just angry. We'd go to McDonald's and you know how they have those fake stone garbage cans? All you gotta do is knock them over and they shatter into a million pieces. So we'd go and knock over every one of those as soon as they closed, but before that, while they were still open we'd go in and clog up all their toilets and stuff. We would be sitting around there shooting spitballs at people all day long and getting kicked out. Just all kinds of little things like that. We even shattered a couple windows one night. We'd also rip out all the stuff from the dumpsters and throw it all over the parking lot. We never got caught for it. We lived right around the corner, and we were little kids. They were probably looking for teenagers or somethin'. But the old age home was right along the little river there, and they had all these big glass sliding doors on their little back porch areas. There was some landscaping and stuff along the river, and it was nice and serene. So what we'd do is come out when it got dark and we'd go walking along there until we'd see some old folks just sitting in there watching the television or doing something like that. We'd sneak up real quietly to the window, then just BANG on it and scream at the top of our lungs, and then you'd see them go "AHHHH!!!" Just terrified, you know. I wouldn't be surprised if we caused a few people to have heart attacks, but we were little kids and we didn't understand the concept of that. To us, it was just great fun, and a way to get back at them for ruining all of our fun.

RRP: Who was the neighborhood bully when you were a kid that your dad ended up dealing with?

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AI: His name was Sean. He came from a family of four brothers. All of them were just insane fucking Irish kids who were real hardcore. Their dad was a real mean bastard, a Korean War vet who had seen a lot of action. He was a big guy who also drank... a very insane guy. That's why all his sons - and they were all sons, not daughters - were all really violent and just really fucking angry. Probably half-crazed because of the way their father must've treated them. These guys were notorious. I can remember walking out of that McDonald's one time as a little kid and this guy Sean, who was like 19 at the time (I was 10), he came running all the way across the parking lot, knocked the food out of my hand, grabbed me by the shoulders, and kicked me in the balls 6 times. Then he started to punch me around a little bit, and luckily a couple of women who worked at the place were able to get him off of me and shoo him away. That's the kind of guy he was: to do this. It didn't matter how small or young you were. He just liked to randomly grab some victim and clobber them. Him, or one of his brothers had been doing this to me for quite some time. You always looked out for him, you know. Well, one time I was walking across the foot bridge and I was with my sister and my father. He had this pull shopping carriage; we were going over to the Star Market. Me and my sister were both little kids. I was maybe 10 and she was 11. We were walking across and Sean started making some noises and saying some shit. Talking all this shit about my family or somethin', just trying to antagonize us a little bit as we were walking by him. He didn't realize... I don't think he even knew what my dad was about, so he made a big fucking mistake. By the time my dad got to the end of the bridge, he just threw down that carriage and told us to wait there. Then he walked back across the bridge and the guy's like, "what? what?" My dad just grabbed him and picked him up. There was a few inches of ice on the river at that time, and a bunch of shopping carriages in it. When we were kids we would always dump shopping carriages off the bridge just to watch them fall in the water, so it was full of shopping carriages: a real nasty place to fall with all that sharp shit stuck in the frozen river. So my dad picks him up and heaves him over the edge of the bridge and is holding him by his leg and the back of his thumb. "Motherfucker, you wanna take a swim motherfucker!!!" And the kid starts crying his eyes out, begging and screaming for his life in this high-pitched voice. Me and my sister were never so fuckin' proud. We were laughin' and laughin' - loving every second of it. I thought for sure my dad was gonna drop him. We were yelling, "Drop him! Drop him!" The guy was crying and screaming. Eventually when the guy was so fucking freaked out, finally my dad let him up, and he was all flushed with tears in his eyes. It was so nice to see that fucking prick looking the way he should. I wonder what ever happened to that guy.

King Louie

King Louie is a man who turns up in many unexpected places. In addition to the "Cowbell Rock" of the King Louie One Man Band, he has also been a member of the Royal Pendeltons, The Persuaders, The Bad Times, The Click 'Ems, The 69th & The Harahan Crack Combo, Gerry and the Bastard Makers, The Exploding Hearts, King Louie & The Lakeview Kings, King Louie And The Hot Rod Addicts, Kajun SS, The Loose Diamonds, Kondor, The Black Rose Band, and probably many more. He has lived in Louisiana, Oregon, and Tennessee. He's been on watchmeatahotdog.com, as well as played songs and got interviewed as a "New Orleans legend" on the TV Morning Show in Memphis. He has even played a benefit for the Louisiana Crawfish Farmers Association after last years One Man Band release "Chinese Crawfish" on Goner Records. My introduction to him was "Jesus Loves My One Man Band (Extra Ball Records), and was floored by the volatile splaying of Rockabilly, Blues, and Punk Rock conventions by this cajun wildman savant. The following interview was done with him on the phone with Lisa on October 18th. - Ben

RRP: What is the deal with Chinese crawfish? Is China the main competitor with New Orleans in the international crawfish market?

KL: Uuuuhh... I don't know 'bout that. I don't care what the rest of the world does. People in Louisiana have no business buying crawfish from anywhere but home...Texas and 'Sippi would even be a crime. The ching chang crawdaddys are just like rubber. You don't get all the blump from the lump in the scoop! Some environmentalist wants to talk to me about the [crawfish] farmers in Louisiana... she don't realize I'm a goof!

RRP: Who is Art Boonpam, and why is he dressed in a Bruce Lee costume riding a giant Crawfish on your album cover?

KL: Oh, Art is my main man! We done tore down many a Poncho's Mexican Buffet in our time! When I was doin' the cover for the record, I was like: "Art, I need a China-man." The cover is so fucked really. Art is Thai, the hat is Vietnamese... and the overall theme is supposed to be Chinese?

RRP: Tell me about your recording process. From what I read it seemed like you recorded Chinese Crawfish in your house. Is that right? How do you usually record albums?

KL: Chinese Crawfish was recorded in the kitchen of an old New Orleans house. Believe it or not, it was recorded digitally on a computer. The guy who recorded it was in a band in the 90's called White Zombie, and instead of spending all of his money on drugs and fancy cars, he bought recording equipment. Now he records bands in New Orleans. Basically everything we used was tube. He bought these pre-amps that were ancient and he had them re-done. He has a recording room, his laundry room is where we had the vocal echo chamber, and in his bedroom we had the guitar amp. Inside the kitchen I played the percussion instruments and sang, so it was bouncing off of these old stoves and china cabinets. It was done digitally, but we had a good idea of what we wanted to do going into it. I record kind of different each time. I record wherever I can do it. New Orleans and Memphis are usually where I record my stuff. In Memphis we usually record maybe at Jack's [Oblivians] house or, well we recorded at Easley's once, and that was great, but then it burned down. Usually it's like I have to record where I



have to record. My first One Man Band album was recorded in a studio that records death metal bands, but I did it because it was \$15 an hour and I actually did the whole album for like \$5 an hour. The guy said he never recorded anything but heavy metal, but let's try it. So it's not like I say: oh, I want to go to this studio because of the way they recorded this other band that I liked, blah, blah, blah... I record where I need to record, when I can. If it's somebody's bathroom, if it's at my house... if I'm ready to record, I just go and do it where I can do it. And it gives a good photograph of what I'm trying to do, I think, because it's real honest... even though I'm not always so honest. [laughs]

RRP: What made you decide to start a one-man band?

KL: I just became bandless. It wasn't trying to be on the one-man band wagon, which when I started the one-man band in 1999, you didn't have a bunch of people doing one-man bands. It was Hasil Adkins and I guess Bob Log was around then, but basically I was playing in the Persuaders and the Royal Pendeltons and both of those bands didn't really break up [but went inactive]. Shaggy went to Memphis and never came back, so I'm not in with them [The Persuaders] anymore. In the Pendeltons, I had been playing drums for almost like 10 years with those guys, and I was just ready to write some songs and play guitar myself. So I had a bass drum and when I first started out I didn't even have anything on my feet really, and wasn't hitting any kind of cowbell. When I first started it was just guitar and a bass drum. I was just singin' and keepin' a beat, strummin' a guitar. Then I was like, you know, I think I can play harmonica, so I added that. Then I added the coffee can, and then I added the cowbell. I've excelled at the cowbell fairly well. I'm better at that than anything else I do. [laughs] So after a year of doing that, I recorded my first record and everything. I recorded it in 1999, right after I first started, about four months after I started [playing as a] one-man band, but the record didn't come out until, I think, 2002. And then last year I went and did the Chinese Crawfish record. I've kinda got this reputation for doing all these projects, but really I like to concentrate on one project, then a couple weekends every couple months I'll do something else. Like, I'll go to Memphis and do the Loose Diamonds, or I'll do the Kajun SS, or the Persuaders do a re-union, or I'll do a one-man band show. But really I'm in one full-time band all the time, and that's the Black Rose Band. That's pretty much where I spend all of my time.

RRP: So what can you tell me about the Black Rose Band?

KL: Well, the drummer and I Dustin had been playing since I moved back from the West Coast, and I've been in and out of Memphis for 15 years playing music, moving back and forth to New



Orleans. Basically, me and Dustin, who is the drummer for the Black Rose Band, we were playin' and just trying to record stuff... doin' a rock band that's really not like everyone trying to be a big rock-n-roller saying "oh, we like rock now, we're a rock band!" I wanted to do something louder than the garage music that we've been doin', but I've been playing banjo and actually pickin' the guitar and getting more into that vein with songwriting. We were trying to do this band for a couple years, but we never could get it off the ground. It was right when we started to do stuff - we had all these songs going, and we were starting to play shows as Kondor - then Katrina came and just fucked everything up. When we came back to New Orleans we found a lot of bands had disbanded. So we hooked up with Julian, who was in a band called Detonations, and he came on-board. Adam from The Scripts came on-board. We had all become bandless, but we came back to New Orleans and regrouped, and I was like: we are gonna do this band! These were all people that I had known for years and always wanted to play with but never did, and it was like: let's start this band and not bullshit around and wait till somethin' else fucked-up happens. There was a realization that we gotta get our shit together and do this because we could fuckin' die tomorrow. I almost did die in the fuckin' hurricane.

RRP: So you were right there in the thick of it when it happened?

KL: Well, the hurricane didn't really hit New Orleans as much as it did the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and we got a lot of the water from it. My girlfriend and I left the day of the storm. The storm was comin' and we weren't going to evacuate, then we were like fuck it, let's go to Mississippi because her mother had got through hurricane Camille in '69 with only 3 feet of water, and that was supposed to be the biggest hurricane on record. So we thought: let's go tough it out, and we went to this city in Mississippi called Pearlinton. It's a few miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico, and the eye of the storm passed right over us. It was four-and-a-half to five hours of what sounded like a tractor coming through the house. Then when the eye passed, the storm came through, and this wave came through the fjord. We were on this river called the Pearl River and the river overflowed. We swam out of a log cabin. We swam in this huge flood and through the debris to the roof of a barn. We had to be rescued and it took us 30 days for us to get out of the woods. Then we were sitting there from Monday till Thursday, just sitting on this porch waiting for people to rescue us. It was totally devastated. The

forest one day looked like just this regular forest that you go and ride motorbikes in and fish, then afterwards it looked like when you're driving down the interstate and their tearing down the forest to build Walmart and its just a bunch of logs. It looked like that, but for miles all around. It was just devastating. But yeah, we swam, and I was holding onto trees and shit. We were in like 12 feet of water.

RRP: That is one of the scariest things I can imagine.

KL: It was scary. I had been through small hurricanes before where just branches come down and you get a foot of water out in the yard, but when this storm surge came through it just barreled through. Water was comin' in the house, and it was like: fuck, we gotta get out of here! We might have had 4 or 5 feet of water in our house. But when we got out, in about 2 or 3 minutes there was 10 feet of water... then it went up even higher than that. Yeah, we were fuckin' swimmin' in this shit. Then we waited for days and days, and finally they came and rescued us. These people came through with chainsaws and four wheelers and picked us up. They drove us to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in the back of a truck. I didn't have shoes or a shirt, I was caked in mud... had mosquito bites. It was fucked up.

RRP: So after that you decided to go to Memphis because of everyone you knew there?

KL: We actually went to Opelousas, Louisiana, for a little bit. Before the hurricane, Gonerfest 2: Electric Goneroo (or whatever they called it) was already in effect. They had already planned it, and it just happened that a month or three weeks before it was Katrina. So I went up there to do the Persuaders reunion and I was like fuck it, I'm gonna stay here until there's no more bullshit. I had a lot of time in Memphis. I was livin' in a hotel room for 45 days. I was at the Red Roof Inn, so I sat there and wrote a lot of stuff. I have endless amounts of songs I have written that just sit in notebooks, so I started going through all the songs I'd written for bands that I've done that hadn't been working out and said, "I like this one, I'm gonna put it back together." Then I came back and we are just kickin' it with the Black Rose Band, trying to make it happen. We've got a 45 coming out. We made some Koozies to keep your beer cold. They've got our little logo on 'em; it's kind of funny-lookin'.

But I actually did come back to New Orleans right after the storm. The day after I got rescued I went to Lafayette for two days and I came back. I spent about a week here cleaning up. The roof of my mother's house was ripped off and it rained and ruined everything she owned. All of our pictures: everything was destroyed in her house. It was just fucked up because, you know, my family's getting old. We own a business, a hardware store that I work at, and it just doesn't look like there's any end to it. Literally. If you came down here and saw the devastation... People don't hear about it anymore on the news, and after a year people feel like you should be getting over stuff. Well, it's been a year, but it's never ending. You can go driving in the areas that are devastated and it looks like it did a day after the storm, the only difference is there're weeds growing up on everything. It's pretty fucked up. We've been in this FEMA trailer. I was on tour in Europe for like three weeks last month and while we were there we got the notice that we would have to leave. So now we have three different places that we stay during the week, and it's just crazy runnin' back and forth.

RRP: So they kicked you out of the trailer?

KL: Well, you see, you have to have plumbing hooked up and everything, and the plumbing was going onto this other guy's property and he didn't

want it there because it was affecting the parking for his business. So it's like, if you can't take a shit, you can't live there, you know? So they turned it off, and of course they turned off everything else. They turned off the power, so when we got back from Europe the refrigerator had maggots in it.

RRP: So your hometown where you grew up is Harahan. That's where the hardware store and stuff is?

KL: Yeah, it's outside of New Orleans. It's a pretty cool little place. It's cool because it's not so cool. It's hard to explain.

RRP: You managed a skateboard shop there when you were younger?

KL: Yeah, we had skateboards back from the summer of '85 until summer of 2001. We did skateboards for a long time. Even after I had really gotten into music and I wasn't skateboarding like a crazy maniac, I still did it because I love skating. I wanted to do it for the kids. But I just couldn't do it anymore. It got to where it was costing money to have the skateboard shop open. I did it for years. I mean, for 16 years I ran a skateboard shop.

RRP: Is it true you dropped out of school in the 9th grade?

KL: Yeah, I went until like around Christmas time and just never came back. I was actually asked to leave.

RRP: Were you bad?

KL: Well, I was in 9th grade twice. The first time in 9th grade I went to three different schools, and then it was just bullshit. I didn't like it and wasn't going to deal with it, so I fucking left.

RRP: My brother's going through 9th grade for the third time right now. He's 17.

KL: That's old enough to quit.

RRP: My mom dropped out, my dad dropped out, my sister dropped out, and now he's thinking he might. I told him: well, you're 17, you might as well get your GED.

KL: That's what I did. I went and got my fuckin' GED, and I'm glad I did. Fuck it. I'm glad I didn't have to go to school. I would have wound up murdering myself or stabbed someone in the forehead. I just couldn't deal with school at all. It physically pained me to go and sit in the desk and do that whole thing. I brought the same notebook to school for every class and just slept on it.

RRP: Has the school of life educated you in ways that traditional school hasn't?

KL: Uhhh... no. [laughs] I usually don't realize I've learned something until after I've been through it. Then I'm like: okay, I get it now. I just kind of walk around in circles all the time. Seriously. I'm not really trying to put myself through a lot of unwanted torture just trying not to do what everybody wants me to, and this and that. So yeah, I'll end up learning some pretty hard lessons that I probably didn't have to teach myself, but I didn't know. Does that sound retarded? [laughs]

RRP: Didn't you work the carnival circuit as a Ferris wheel operator? Did you pick up a lot of hot gypsy ass?

KL: No. It's like, to be a real carnie, you have to be in the family. If you're not, you're just like another worker there. But I really got to study the hierarchies of the trailer trash system. I was by far the best ride operator at the amusement park. The people who own the amusement park had it handed down from family to family. They're carnies, and then they also professional wrestle. They're on this underground circuit as professional wrestlers and they

wrestle for free under a bridge every Sunday. That's the only time they are not at the amusement park. It's pretty cool. The amusement park I worked at was almost 100 years old. It's one of the oldest in America. They liked me a lot because I'd do shit people didn't want to do, but I would make it fun. Like no one liked to drive the little choo-choo train, so I would do it and I would get on the microphone and instead of being like, "keep your hands inside and shut up," I would give a tour. If I'd catch kids making out, I'd be like, "look at the lovers at twilight." I would totally give a tour and point to stuff, and you're not really supposed to do that. Or like, we had this thing called the Rock N' Roll. It's kind of like the Swiss Matterhorn where you spin around. This one was called the Rock N Roll and it had hot rods on it. I'd bring my own CDs and I'd DJ it. It was like this oldies thing, and I'd get the kids screamin' so hard. I'd be like, "from Redondo Beach, that was the So and So's," and I'd give the city and the year it charted and everything. I would study it when I was at home, so when I'd go do the ride I'd DJ it like I was on the radio. The kids would go phenomenally nuts and the caterers would come out an be like, "Get this guy off of here, these kids are having too much fun. They're screaming too loud!" I loved it man! I wouldn't tell the kids not to go head-on on the bumper cars. I'd let 'em just smash each other, because I mean, you can't really hurt each other. Once the Exploding Hearts came and applied for jobs, and I taught them how to do all the rides and we just totally took over the amusement park. It was awesome. The punks took it over. It was me, Kid Killer from the Exploding Hearts, and Joe Pestilence working there. It was just a total riot. By the second season we took the whole thing over, runnin' the roller coaster and shit. It was fun.

RRP: What is the S.S. Klan?

KL: A bunch of swamp donkeys: me and my friends. It's basically me and my friends who hang out in New Orleans. We ride through the swamps every Wednesday and get stoned, drink beer and just go crazy. It's the Persuaders guys, the Kajun SS guys, the Die Rotzz guys... and it's not just the guys in bands. It's people who hang around me and our friends too. We're just like a clan of stormtroopers stormtrooping around the city, going nuts and kickin' shit over.

RRP: How did you find out that the scent of cooking hotdogs and popcorn masks the smell of cooked cabbage?

KL: It don't really mask it. I'm just sayin': "Hey mom, my girl is comin' over. If you ever want me to get off of your sofa, don't cook it! Please!!! I'm 34 for Christ sake! It stinks!!!"

RRP: What sort of advice would you give to a kid who is thirteen and too ugly to live?

KL: Do everything you can do to make it to about 17, then quit school. Quit school, and you'll probably start getting laid a lot sooner. [laughs] Don't take my advice. Don't ever have kids. Don't ever fucking get married. Even though you're 13 and too ugly to live, you shouldn't kill yourself. You should wait a few years, start doing drugs, drop out of school, then kill yourself if you want to. [laughs] Drink Maalox and eat pickles in a pouch. Those things are great!



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Everybody's favorite psycho-glitter punks from St. Louis have returned from a tour with Exene Cervenka to present to us the third installment of their unique brand of psychobilly. 7 Shot Screammers in Wonderland catalogues the band's experiences with life on the road, inner turmoil, and their return home to rejoin the burgeoning St. Louis rock and roll scene they helped spark years ago, all the while offering a new take on the exceptional blend of punk, glam, and rock and roll that they have become known for.



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Ye Olde Record Reviews

Attention Labels: We will no longer accept review submissions without full album art. No jewel cases required, though, so you can save on shipping.

Already sent something? If it is not in this issue, please check the website. We had so many submissions, not everything could fit here.

46 Short

"Truth Denied"

www.tkorecords.com

This is better than most hardcore punk that's out there due to it being both urgent and earnest. Lyrics are socially aware but couched in personal experience. There's a real 80's feel to the music that doesn't seem like silly posturing. These guys know their niche and they fill it well. - Ben

A.D.H.D.

"Till Your Ears Bleed"

www.aresrecords.com

With a band name and album title like this, I really expected something different when I put this disc in the player. Instead of spastic, fastpitch hardcore, I got a pleasant blast of punk rock-n-roll from Orange Co. with influences stemming from The Rolling Stones and The Stooges. I'm not dissatisfied. Good stuff. -Lisa

Akimbo

"City of the Stars"

www.livetocrush.com, www.seventhrule.com

Heavy, angular metallic hardcore set with about a billion arty complex structures going on. Screamo lyrics ranging from "and so they spawn/like maggots from the anus of a god" to a song where the singer bends his frustrated brain to believe he can defeat the morons of the world because he can lift his TV on his own, even though he never works out. "Aiming For the Heel" claims "I've never considered myself a poet/this has never been about blowing your mind/never." My mind isn't exactly blown but my ears may be, so congratulations, I guess? - Rocko

Alcoholic White Trash

"Punk Rock Jihad"

www.myspace.com/crustyrecords.com

This is a really fast sort of scumfuc punk rock by a band that obviously loves 80's speed metal as well. It's a relentless attack of juvenile shock humor paired with a Slayer-fueled frenzy. With songs like "Blunt Anal Trauma," "Suck My Dick Bitch," and "I Shit My Cunt," it seems like they are trying really hard to never get laid. But I have to say "Bi-Curious George" is one of the funniest song titles I have ever heard. - Ben

The Alligators

"Hide Your Children...Surrender Your Women"

allagartos@yahoo.com

Hard-edged surfy trash punk from Cleveland with a couple Link Wray covers, some instrumental tracks, and a tribute to Cleveland native Screaming Jay Hawkins. There is a touch of horror influence, and the recording is pretty lo-fi, even though it was recorded in a studio. The vocals don't always sound the greatest, but music is solid, at times reminding me of the Coffin Bangers. Not stellar, but it won't give you warts either. - Ben

All American Werewolves

"Hate Rock U.S.A."

Eugene Records, PO Box 1002 Lexington, KY 40588

This is pretty decent straightforward rock'n'roll: 2 chords by 3 guys on a 4-track. The title might be a

little misleading, though, because this doesn't really sound hateful. Instead you get rough-edged but catchy tunes that would go well with cheap beer and tattooed women. And if you don't like those two things, you are reading the wrong magazine. - Ben

The Alley Dukes

"Northern Rednecks"

www.flyingsaucerrecords.com

Canadian rockabilly. Good, clean guitar and a thumpin' upright. They cover two artists I like: Hasil Adkins' "No More Hot Dogs" and David Allan Coe's "Fuckin' in the Butt." Some of the original songs bore me a bit, and I skip through a few tracks. These fellas are proficient musicians, but something falls short for me. I'll give this disc another listen later and maybe I won't be so foggy. -Lisa

Almighty Lumberjacks of Death

"Always Out of Control, But Never Out of Beer!"

www.disconnectedrecords.com

This is the entire discography from this Detroit band, spanning from the late 80's to the early 90's, and includes some previously unreleased stuff as well. There is something undeniably catchy about this band's mid-tempo, but not boring approach. They seem rather proud about jumping on the Desert Storm bandwagon, but politics aside, this disc is pretty enjoyable the more I listen to it. The press sheet describes them as Oi! with some aspects of Leatherface, which is pretty apt. - Ben

Ambivalent

"Raw As Fuck"

www.brokenbonezrecords.com

Decent hardcore punk stuff that's pretty digestible overall: the songs won't stick to the roof of your mouth or block your colon. I see potential here, as they have a little more character than a lot of many other bands kicking around this style. Still, they aren't deviating too far from the pack. I liked track #3 "Lost My Head" the best. The recording quality on this disc isn't very good, though. The guitar sound is awful, but the energy comes through. I guess I'm somewhat ambivalent. - Ben

Amps II Eleven

Self-Titled

www.smogveil.com

This band features members of notable Cleveland bands such as 9 Shocks Terror, Stepsister, Face Value and Southern Trespass. The muscles being flexed here are bulging with Southern rock-n-roll strength and tattooed with a touch of 70's proto-punk. The vocals aren't the best, but the music is pretty riff heavy and powerful. - Ben

Andre Williams

"Aphrodisiac"

www.pravdamusic.com

Williams has been in the music industry for over 50 years and is called by some to be "the original rapper" and the "Black Godfather." This album combines soul, jazz, R&B and lounge to create a soothing musical escape from your hard day. Although the lyrics deal with personal demons like alcoholism ("I'm Not Worthy") and drugs ("I Don't Need Mary-Juana"), it's still a nice listen to kick up your feet to and tip back a nice glass of sweet tea or a frothy beer. -Lisa

Anti-Hero

"Unpretty"

www.anti-hero.ca

Look, I have to admit it: I rolled my eyes when I got

this CD to review. A band with two beautiful girls, putting out a CD called "Unpretty." I took a moment and prayed, "Dear God, please don't let this be about their zits, or bad highlights, or petty larceny on the cheerleading squad. Love, Carol High Hair." Happily, this is a good solid disc. I'm a sucker for songs with good hooks, and I wasn't let down. "Unpretty", "More or Less" — They get stuck in my head, sometimes in a good way. This is their debut disc, and it shows a lot of promise. They're good musicians, the songs are well-arranged, and the production is very straightforward. What I'm really looking forward to Anti-Hero's second CD. The lyrics on "Unpretty" are a little basic, and every song has pretty much the same theme. Somehow someone did someone wrong, and the wronged party is stronger for it. Good message, but hopefully as they grow, they'll branch out and cover different topics, maybe take more chances. Rose, the singer, thanks Alanis, Madonna, and Veruca Salt. I hope next time she channels them less and shows off her own voice more. - Carol High Hair

Arcs

Self-titled

www.arcsmusic.com

This band from Toronto, Canada, is pretty skilled musically but unfortunately for me don't play the kind of music I enjoy listening to. Every song is way too long (shortest song comes in at 3:50) and very soft and touchy-feely. This could possibly be on a soundtrack to an after school special about a girl struggling to come to terms with her parents' divorce. - Lisa

Arsenic On The Rocks

Self-titled

www.myspace.com/arsenicontherocks

To me this seems to be a dark, goth-punk, but not like the Misfits. They have to sound like somebody I should be able to reference, but I just can't think of whom. There is some metal stamped in the guitar playing, which is nice to hear because it's the good old kind of metal guitar. Not the lame wanking shit or nu metal. This band hails from Lexington, KY and has former band members from The Murders, Heartthrob Jesus, Leave It At The Door, and Stabbed To Death. The vocals leave me unsatisfied, but not terribly. Eight songs that I don't love, but I'm not ready to gouge my eardrums out either. - Lisa

The Astroglides

"Selling Out"

www.theastroglides.com

Here we have an Israeli surf band that is more than just a gang of generic tremolo-picking Dick Dale wannabes. This band is not afraid to monkey with the format, and this CD shows the experimentation really paying off. Venturing into both exotic atmospheres and double bass pounding surfcore, these songs often strike genius. I've heard their previous output, and while it was good, I think they've now worked out the kinks and realized their potential. One of the best things about doing this 'zine is getting awesome CDs from obscure bands across the globe, and this one sure fits the bill. It should also be noted that the layout of the CD is spectacular. -Ben

Bad Lieutenants

"Every Time I Come Around..."

www.badlieutenants.com

These guys aren't bad: kind of a punk-n-roll with subtle 70's underpinnings. They can be pretty good, but sometimes I get a little seasick on the choppy waters of this CD. While they capably sail

through their many influences, they're not quite ready to compete for the America's Cup yet. Some songs grab me while others let my attention slip through their fingers. - Ben

Bambix

"Club Matuchek"

www.gokartrecords.com

Not generally the type of music I listen to, Bambix does add something worthwhile to the genre of pop-punk. Rather than being bubblegum, this Dutch band injects mature melodies, an often metal guitar crunch, full production, and an earnestness reminiscent of Leatherface. Thankfully, the capable female vocals aren't cutesy, and while it still isn't my thing at all, it does have its merits. - Ben

The Band From Planet X

"Rock N Roll Grand Guignol"

www.thebandfromplanetx.com

This Canadian band brings surf, garage, and punk together in a very eccentric and highly original way. The arrangements are clever and unusual without being smug or dull, and there is a strain of intelligent humor amidst the B-movie campiness. This is extremely good. Just plain cool and highly recommended. -Ben

Banane Metalik

"Sex, Blood, & Gore'n'Roll"

www.bananemetalik.com

With a band playin' "gore-n-roll," what better way to start the album off but with a chainsaw murder? Banane Metalik sing almost entirely in French, and play a very metal psychobilly that thankfully doesn't quite sound like every other bland metal psychobilly band out there. It may be due to the fact that they have an ultra-heavy and mostly frantic take on the genre. Their press sheet notes that they started in 1989, suggesting that they may have been a stylistic precursor to newer acts such as Os Catalepticos and Asmodeus. Standout songs such as "Los Enfants des Ténèbres" and "Don't Dictate My Way of Life" are crushers that hit hard and below the belt. The CD booklet is thick and filled with pics of the band in their gory B-movie best. Obviously they aren't taking themselves too seriously, and the disc comes off as dark metal filtered through a grindhouse film library. Imagine your thrash mixed with slasher flicks. I bet their shows are a bloody good time. - Ben

The Barbarellatones

"Invasion of the Surf Zombies!" & "Cold Sore"

www.barbarellatones.com

Here is competent and not clichéd gothabilly. Interesting and varied songs that come off sort of musical theatre-ish, but in a good way. A goofy sense of humor and quirky songwriting makes them more creative than your average goth band. Reminds me of King Missile (vocals), David Bowie, Devo, and a less drugged up Velvet Underground. It's surfy and mellow, fronted by a crossdresser who used to be in Sex With Lurch. The "Cold Sore" album isn't as good as "Invasion..." -Lisa

Baseball Furies

"All-American Psycho"

www.bigneckrecords.com, www.flyinbomb.com

This disc erupts in fits and bursts of savage fury, each song burrowing into your cranium with the subtlety of a jackhammer, and believe me, this is truly savage. Originally released on a 7" in 1998 and a 10" in 1999, these tracks have finally been compiled onto disc for mass consumption for those who can handle it. These guys issue their grating garage punk with frothing mouths and bleeding knuckles. It sounds like a mean, cathartic mess that definitely won't leave you feeling shower fresh all day long.

46 Your favorite punk band will seem like Raffi after

taking this sonic reaming. - Ben

Baxter House

"Please Baxter, Don't Hurt 'Em" EP

www.baxter-house.com

This three-piece band is a female-fronted, aggressive, Hole-y trinity. The music has that "slow down and sing softly then erupt and scream loudly" dynamic that seems little too choreographed for my tastes. Everything about them is capable and combustible but still fails to ignite the passions. - Ben

Scott H. Biram

"Graveyard Shift"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

I may not know pig shit from swine-ola but this I do know this is a great album. Biram incorporates a wide array of influences from southern blues to gospel, country, bluegrass and even metal. The songs this time out have a hard-lived resilience and a dark sincerity to them that sticks to your ribs. It's evocative of sprawling cornfields, the scent of diesel fumes and tarred roads, Lava soap and sweat, and a cold beer after a long day. Biram not only stands out as a one-man band, but also towers over the majority of full bands playing similar music. - Ben

Bitch Boys

"Ride the First Wave"

www.gollygeerecords.com

Golly Gee Records releases have been getting better and better, and the Bitch Boys from Slovenia are no exception to that upward trajectory. You couldn't possibly fit another sublime cut of instrumental surf on this bulging 30 track CD, and oddly enough, none of it comes off as filler. While they do adhere to unspoken genre rule of performing 99% covers, their choice of material is truly inspired. You're not going to hear the zillionth lackluster version of "Pipeline," "Rumble," or "Wipeout." Instead, they pull out more obscure songs from the 60's, toss in some excellent traditional ethnic tunes, and even add some stellar classical material. Furthermore, the renditions are not merely treated with a cosmetic tinkering at a superficial level, but rather get completely reimagined, decontextualized, and fully revived, without going as far as deconstructing the originals or resorting to a low-minded "modernization" of the source material. Add to that a dynamic and precise musicianship that avoids both sterility and pretentiousness, and you are left with something remarkable. Quite a feat, and I am quite a fan. - Ben

Black Jetts

"Right On Sound"

www.dead-beat-records.com

Try imagining a more garage version of The Humpers, and you'll be close to the Black Jetts - and that's a good thing. There's that early 70's proto-punk, rock'n'roll vibe with all the sleaze and wah-wah guitars intact. The addition of a Hammond organ often signals lameness, but here it is actually used to good effect, giving a 60's aura that takes over on a few songs. These guys are apparently from Las Vegas, which is fitting since their songs carry the smell of stained hotel sheets mixed with cigarettes and desperation. Overall an enjoyable disc that'll leave you feeling a little dirty, but satisfied. - Ben

Black Sunday

"Tronic Band"

www.dirtnaprecs.com

Here's yet another band spawned by Memphis' most prolific lady, Alicja Trout, and though I've not heard every band she's done, I've yet to hear one that I dislike. Best known for co-fronting the garage-punk/black wave innovators, Lost Sounds, she is also the heart of rock'n'roll at the center of River City Tanlines, the nihilistic maven doling out punk rock aggression in the Fitts, and a host of other bands.

Here she wrote all the songs and also played the vast majority of them herself. She also recorded them herself, in her own studio. Some of the songs would have actually fit perfectly on a Lost Sounds album, utilizing that same apocalyptic keyboard sound. However, this disc also has some lighter ambience and many well-crafted pop hooks throughout its 13 songs. It neither gets too oppressive and dark, nor too fluffy and sweet. For the most part, the keyboard is way more dominant than guitars, with "Mosquitoes" being a very notable exception. While several tracks on this shine with undeniable brilliance, the less nuclear numbers may take a little getting used to for the more ardent Lost Sounds junkies out there. Some of it doesn't quite get me there, but there are more diamonds than coal. - Ben

Blasé Debris

"Creep Cool"

www.altercationrecords.com

Described as goth-metal and horror-punk, they remind me in parts of the Misfits, the Adicts, and the Koffin Kats... with some Poison-esque guitar solos thrown in. While the music is listenable, the vocals tend to go a bit over-the-top and all over the place, getting pretty cheesy in a drunken Elvis impersonator sort of way. -Lisa

Blue Demon

"Shot To Ruin"

www.mimashimarecords.com

These guys are psychobilly in the sense that they skillfully play rockabilly and surf-style riffs with an overcharged guitar tone that has an almost metal crunch to it. Fortunately though, they don't have the usual drudging, dismal psychobilly vocals, and the playing is accomplished and varied enough to avoid getting lost in the pack of their unimaginative peers. The album is dark, yet fast and energetic. Definitely worth looking into if you like any sort of 'billy music. - Ben

Blue Meanies

"Full Throttle"

www.thickrecords.com

One of the early players in the Ska-infused Punk Rock explosion of the late 90's (this was originally released in 1997), the Blue Meanies somehow never had as much success as their more commercially viable peers. Most of the songs break the mold, which is enjoyable. For example, track 13 "F.O.R.D." is bizarre, and has what sounds like a banjo and an upright bass. I'm not really into this type of music, but I can see where merit is due. These guys are talented musicians who were tired of the same old boring routine and were mixing it up a bit. The last track is 23:08 long and sounds like what could be whale sounds. They also do a cover the tune "Stone Cold Crazy" by Queen. - Lisa

Blitzkid

"Let Flowers Die"

www.horrorhigh.com

In the genre of horror-punk everybody tends to mimic the Misfits, but luckily the singer for Blitzkid can actually sing rather than come off as some sort of caricature. They remind me a bit of early Tiger Army. The songs are melodic and catchy while several downright are right heavy rockers. In a scene filled with mediocrity, these guys manage to stand out from the pack. - Ben

Bobby Bare Jr's Young Criminals' Starvation League

"From The End Of Your Leash"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

Fairly interesting and unique compositions which conjure the following images: a 6 year old girl playing Dominoes, a coffee shop acoustic set, crocheted

doilies, and hippies. I think it could be interesting, but I just don't want to listen to it anymore. - Lisa

The Boils

"From the Bleachers"

www.tkorecords.com

If you like street punk and hardcore with plenty of shouted anthem choruses, then there is plenty to enjoy on this new release by Philly's longstanding punk outfit, the Boils. There are a few reggae-type numbers on here too, and while they don't really push the envelope at all, they do offer some good tunes done right. - Ben

The Bombshells

"Audio Wasteland"

www.thebombshellwebsite.com

Catchy pop punk melodies that will have the Warped Tour fans boppin' along in rhythm. I can see throngs of high school girls wearing their T-shirts that they bought at Hot Topic. Not a bad band by any stretch. They sound like they would wear eyeliner. I read some reviews that others have wrote and mention things like '77 punk style, UK Punk, and someone even used the term punkabilly. Truthfully, I don't think they fall into any of those genres at all. Not a bad listen, but not a regular in my player. - Lisa

Bottlejob

"You And Whose Army"

www.rebellionrecords.com.nl

In the vein of classic British Oi, a la Close Shave, these guys come off from the get go as "fuck you, I got a shaved head and you don't" skinheads in an English way that has not been heard from in close to twenty odd years. Good, solid stuff. The lyrics are young and heartfelt without insulting either intelligence or sensibility. If this sounds good to you so far, then this'll have your elbows swingin' in no time. Fuck the weak shit, the Brits might finally be back once again. - Joe Pacak

Broken Heroes

"I Told U Once"

www.streetantherecords.com

The cover of this CD shows somebody who looks like they took a little bit of an ass whoopin'. The music inside has the same effect! Hard yet melodic, sometimes featuring two singers, a nice touch for some variety. Each song is packed with sometimes brilliant lyrics and includes some of the best lines ever "I threw up in my hand again" and "hey soy breath" in reference to a hippie. The song lyrics are probably the best thing going on here, I mean the music smokes but the lyrics are way better and original. Of course there are the SKINS and fighting/drinking songs, nothing wrong with that. But some of the other stuff is just excellent and real. I'll bet these guys would be great to see live in their hometown. - Jeff Lamm

Brutally Frank

"Thirteen"

www.zeroyouthrecords.com

This three-piece band has managed to push all the right buttons, fiddle with all the right knobs, and tune in something special. They peg themselves as 'Midwest Punkabilly,' hailing from Joplin, MO, and that sums them up pretty well. There's an over-driven rockabilly guitar tone, upright bass, and more than enough punk edge to make you smile ear to ear. The guitar licks rage out of control, the energy broods then surges, and the production is as dirty as their minds. The songs register in the brain stem and will make you shake more than Parkinson's. No frills. No bullshit. No kidding. - Ben

Buck Jones

Explosive Rockabilly 2

www.buckjonesmusic.com

Buck Jones, from Finland, was looking for a band and apparently found one in Himself. Straight up Rockabilly with a couple country numbers thrown in. The bulk of the material (14 tracks) are originals with "Blitzkrieg Bop" (Ramones), the most interesting cover. Excellent guitar playing, a little heavy on the 80's hair band distortion on a few tracks. Just listen to the guitar intro to "The Ballad of Josey Grade and you be wondering who slipped that Scorpions disk in your player. The Rockabilly cuts on this disk are overall okay, but the country tracks don't come off so well with the attempted Finnish hillbilly accent. - Pat May

Built 4 Speed

"Minor (part one)"

Endless Soul Records, www.built4speed.de

This 7-song EP from a newer band on the German scene intrigued me with its focus on moodier, atmospheric mid-tempo songs when initially from the cover I was expecting amped-up psychobilly. Reverbed twangy leads and cool slide work on "Rockin'" and "The Lady" make for late night smoky rain-soaked street scenes in the movie of your mind. Fine noir-ish jazzy tones to some of the spooky playing is a classy touch alongside the fuzzed out guitar. - Rocko

By All Means Necessary

Self-Titled CD

www.byallmeansnecessary.com

By All Means Necessary self-titled first disc has a lot of things that are good on their own, but when mixed together, it just doesn't work. The lyrics are good. The musicians are talented. The topics are diverse. The singer has a good voice. But, the final product is disjointed. Two slow motion ballads are way too long, and way overproduced ("Don't Give up on Me", and "Walking Away" sound really self-conscious), but then there's a jiffy little ska-inspired number "Beyond my Means", and "Buffer Zone" is a rocking political commentary. Here's what I think happened: I think these guys got together, realized they liked playing music together, it sounded good, and they hurried up and got this CD together so they could start getting gigs. (This is their first CD. By All Means Necessary put one out after this, and they're working on a third right now) Nothing wrong with that. In fact, they're probably really good live. They just tried too hard this time. Hopefully on their future discs, they gear down the production a little, and let their music speak for itself. -Carol High Hair

The Can Kickers

"We're Dying But We Ain't Dead"

www.cankickers.com

I saw these guys in Phoenix a couple months ago and really dug them. This is a three-piece playing anything from banjo, kazoo, juice harp, fiddle, washboard, and a bucket. The style is an upbeat sort of Appalachian folk music with Celtic trimmings. Track 12, "Greasy Coat," even takes on hip-hop to good effect using that same instrumentation. The musicianship is really good with a stripped down production that may be too heavy on drums. Vocals are not particularly strong, but they don't ruin anything either. The album has a real direct, intimate feel to it, rather than a pretentiously polished-up, waxy sheen. You get the feel for what the band is really like in an honest, straightforward, and charming way. A lot of the songs are arrangements of old tunes going as far back as the 1800's. However, most of them are originals innovating in that same tradition. These guys told me that they once played someone's backyard in a bomb shelter. I can't think of a better place to see them. This is a cut above most current folk and bluegrass. -Ben

Chairman Plow's Little Red Book

Self-Titled CD

www.myspace.com/crustyrecords

For the first half of this CD it sounds like a drunken punk rocker staggered into open mic night at a coffee house and unleashed a torrent of funny songs as they popped into his head. He rags on everything from Emo to Ted McGinley (whom I had to look up on the internet...he's Jefferson from "Married With Children"). The rest of this CD has more instrumentation while retaining comical lyrics and delivery. It sounds like he had a lot of fun making this. Some of it's pretty silly, but overall an enjoyable, quirky listen. - Ben

Chris Casello

"Done Moved On"

www.starlightdrifters.com

Done moved on from his days as guitar slinger for the Starlight Drifters, Casello has left Michigan for Nashville and this, his first solo album, showcases his ever-expanding musical appetites and impeccable instrumentation. The songs here bounce seamlessly between rockabilly, old-time country, and most notably western swing. Some mandolin and piano make it onto a few cuts, but what's really impressive is how skilled he's become with all manner of steel guitar. Plus, the recordings are mostly live in the various studios, which staves off any semblance of artificiality, keeping the proceedings feeling natural and lifelike. Casello lives and breathes this music, and it shows. The guitar tones are clean and flow with a lyrical sort of jazz proficiency. Some material by Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys, Merle Travis, and others is resurrected in addition to the many excellent originals, including some stellar instrumentals. I'm sure he'll sell out of these discs just by wowing people at his gigs, but it's definitely worth tracking down a copy if you don't live near Tennessee. - Ben

Civet

"Massacre"

www.disasterecords.com

Female street punk with a touch of Rancid influence. Vocals sound VERY much like Broadie from the Distillers. It's okay, but not something I'll probably put back in my player. If I wanted to hear the Distillers (which I don't), I'd just put them in. -Lisa

Complete Control / Krum Bums

"Death Can Wait..." split CD

www.tkorecords.com

This EP has three songs by each band, with one of the three being a cover of the other band. Both play an 80's style hardcore punk, but with some guitar solos. Complete Control's vocals are more sung, while the Krum Bums singer has a very raspy/abrasive voice. It's all around pretty solid. I think I like the Krum Bums fare a little better because of their ferocity. - Ben

Craig Kleeman

"Worst Kisser Ever"

www.craigkleeman.com

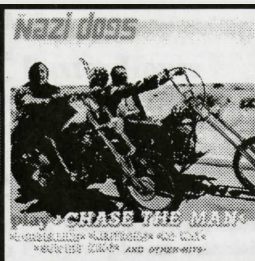
The press sheet says he is influenced by mid 90's radio rock and modern indie-folk. Look for one of these songs to be played during a "Scrubs" montage. This is the kind of music I really don't connect with at all. To me it's like spreading wide and receiving a splintered wooden dildo coated in pig semen. I'd sooner let an epileptic monkey with gardening shears trim my pukes than listen to this CD again, but hey, he's probably good at what he does. - Ben

The Creepniks

"Graveyard Shindig"

www.thecreepniks.com

Horror/Surf/Rock complete with keyboard and eerie vocals complete this 9-track disc from this



slab of Texan goodness. There is a spaghetti western influence, which is evident on tracks like "Pale Rider" and "El Gringo Loco." The instrumentals are the best, as they really capture a Southwestern desert feel with a dash of spookiness. All tracks are mid to slow tempo, preferring to rely heavily on mood over flash. The vocals remind me of the Cramps and Cult of the Psychic Fetus, but they go too far into goofy territory, sounding like a desperate stab at creepiness that instead hits the funny bone. – Ben

The Crimson Ghosts

"Some Kinda Hits"

www.necro-tonerecords.com

As the name suggests this IS a Misfits cover band... but with a surf instrumental take on all the tunes. In my book this is the only way to cover the Misfits, and they do a bang-up job of it. I have to admit, I giggled a lot through the first listen of this because it's so cool and fun to hear all these songs done in surf style. Just to mention a few of the gems, you'll get "Skulls," "American Nightmare," "I Turned into a Martian," and "Hollywood Babylon." There are a total of 17 tracks for you to enjoy in the most depraved way you see fit. – Lisa

Daikaiju

Self-Titled

www.reptilerecords.com

This is a surf rock band that takes their name from the Japanese giant monster films. Indeed there is a sci-fi, futuristic component to their sound, which is very welcome in a genre that often can seem too tied to its beach party influences to fully explore its possibilities. I love instrumentals, especially ones that are inventive and evocative, so there is a lot for me to enjoy here. The songs are nonconforming yet coherent, intense yet atmospheric. Top quality goods here. – Ben

Danny B. Harvey

"Rockabilly Jazz"

www.raucousrecords.com

Danny B. Harvey has an extremely clean guitar tone that carries his exceptional finger picking and fret work on this instrumental disc. He has also played alongside Brian Setzer, Lemmy, Levi Dexter, and many others... a real rockabilly renaissance man that doesn't seem to get enough credit inside or outside of the scene. This disc is a truly pleasurable outing that infuses jazz with country, bluegrass and rockabilly. The laid back jazz numbers are so elegant. A must have for guitar aficionados. – Lisa

Darbuster

"A Weakness For Spirits"

www.darkbuster.com

I am not a huge fan of albums kicking off with songs called "We are {insert band name here}." The next song has a sort of DKM street punk sound and promilitary message to it, and isn't bad. Following that you get a slower track with a slight country feel using Social Distortion type guitar hooks. Wasn't really feeling it. Then the album goes full-blown ska and reminded me of the Slackers a bit. Not bad. Damn, then the very next song is a hardcore number. Their main thrust seems to be to melodic street punk, though, which has led to them being referred to as the "East Coast NOFX." For my money it seems

like they're best at the ska. Nothing else really stood out for me. It's the usual big production guitar sound on mostly mid-tempo songs, and it's not usually catchy enough to get lodged permanently in my head. They have a New Bomb Turks sticker on their guitar, which made me want to put that on instead. I feel bad saying that because they aren't terrible, but I'm just not excited about it. – Ben

DC Snipers

"Missile Sunset"

www.dead-beat-records.com

I know a lot of people are jaded about the current wave of punk bands employing cheap keyboard sounds, but here's another one actually worth your time. They don't seem to be blatantly trespassing in their forerunner's backyards, but rather bought a few choice acres of their own way out in left field. They aren't trying to revive the new-wave sound or out-stupid the Spits. Instead of being gleefully retarded with their instruments, they seem to have smartened up and brought them to an art school flophouse for some enlightened weirdness. They strike a nice balance between dark and unconventional while also being fun and catchy. I can see myself spending some quality time with this CD and building a strong relationship. – Ben

The Dead Pets

"The Revenge of the Village Idiots"

www.thedeadpets.co.uk

This British band plays punk rock with sax and trumpet. It's not really what you'd expect as ska-punk, though, since they don't really use that syncopated ska rhythm, and the brass is usually buried under loud, fast, and distorted guitars. The singer has a good street punk sort of voice that conveys a gravelly intensity, yet doesn't sound forced and unnatural as he actually hits notes. It ends with a good version of "We're Coming Back" by Cocksparrer. All in all, a fine album. – Ben

Dean Dirg

"26 Kicks to Make the Whole World Pay"

www.dead-beat-records.com

Great Jesus, these guys are nuts! Raging rock to the nth degree! This band is a swift kick to the ass and fist to the eye. Most songs fall under the one minute mark, which explains how this 26-track CD comes to only 26:39 minutes of playtime. But there is a whole lot of goodness packed into that small time frame. This shit is so raw, if it were chicken I'd have salmonella by now. I'd be puking up my guts and shittin' my pants for this band. And if THAT'S not a ringing endorsement, I don't know what is. Not sure where these guys are from, their band website is all in a foreign language that I didn't recognize. This is what punk rock should be. Period. – Lisa

Demon City Wreckers

"Inner Demons"

www.hairball8.com

Demon City Wreckers come out swingin from Tucson with 10 tracks of heavy psycho that makes no apologies being more in-yer-face punk than 'billy. Lots of straight power-chording leads the charge, and truthfully the Wreckers don't need a lot of flashy licks to make an impact. A great mix of heavy styles and tons of 'whoa-OH!' choruses will get you

stompin' to the upright thud. "Undead Rumble" is just a few cuts in, and by then you already know the Demon City Wreckers are the ones dishin' out the ass-whoopins in this fight! The title cut "Inner Demons" has a nasty swagger I really, really dig and singer Jason Blood shines here with pure punk delivery and a touch of Danzig howling bravado. These guys stick with the themes inherent in the genre but keep it raw and never let subject or song get mired in gimmick. One of the best heavy psychobilly records I've heard in a long time. Absolutely a must have for psychos. – Rocko

Demon's Claws

Self-titled CD

www.deadcanaryrecords.com

Backwoods psychedelic garage rock sludged up with sawdust and shrooms makes for some good listening. And when I said psychedelic, don't think you'll get digressive hippie noodling that picks the meat from song carcasses. Instead they stay alive and vital with an oddly surreal aura and stripped-down appeal. The vocals are fuzzed out while the music stomps down dark trails carrying you on its back. This is one of those albums you listen to and think "where the hell is this coming from, what is this?" It's initially grating yet strangely compelling, and it takes you so far away from the mainstream that turning on the radio after listening to this is like waking up from a cool dream into a mundane reality, then trying to fall back asleep to dream it some more. Unlike your chances of having that same dream, though, you can get into the world of this CD over and over again... and it is little better each time. – Ben

The Demon Seeds

"Have a Date with Death"

www.myspace.com/demonseeds

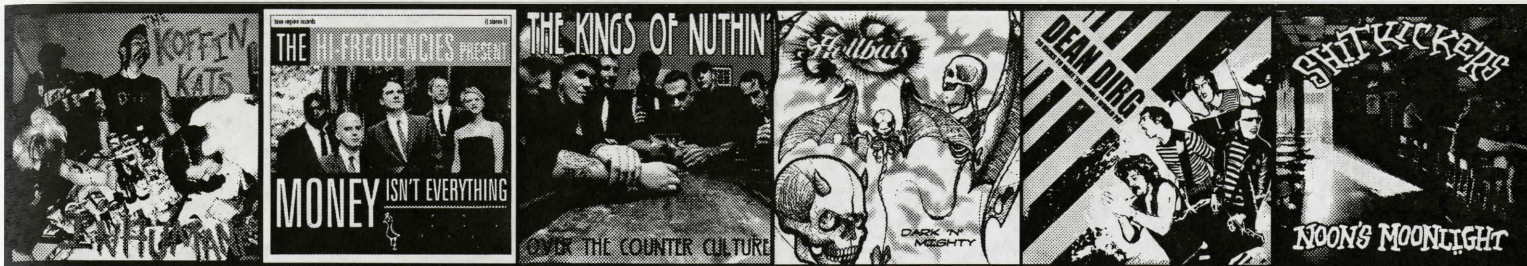
This is upbeat fuzzed-out garage rock with a horror theme, organs, and some surfy undertones. Kind of reminds me of bands like the Brimstones, the Butchers, the Fuzztones, and the Hexxers. The vocals aren't quite there, but it's still enjoyable: perfect for getting drunk at your next Halloween party and urinating on the neighbor's dog. – Ben

Dennis Most and the Instigators

"Vampire City"

www.trash2001.de

(Note to my editors: "Sex Is An Art Form"? "Excuse My Spunk"? "Heavy Metal Thunder Child"???? This has left me confused, questioning my beliefs, and I think I now have an irritating rash. We need to drink 30 beers while listening to this together...) Apparently Dennis Most has been releasing independent music since the late 60's and even had an early track featured on a Killed By Death compilation. That song – "Excuse My Spunk" has been re-recorded and included on this album. I don't know...these tracks are sort of metal, sort of garagey but with modern studio production and Dennis's voice can sound like that bald Smashing Pumpkin trying to come off like Iggy or something. What is he singing about? Why does "I Know I Need A Hit Record" sound like "I don't need a hamburger" to me? But in a way, some of it kinda...rocks? Or not? No??? I seriously don't know. Did someone just slip something in my drink when I wasn't looking? Okay wait...it stopped kinda rockin around the time the



piano synth comes in on "Gruesome Stories." Or is that totally great in some fucked up way?!? I think in my bizarro universe Dennis Most earned my respect. I am now going to flush my own head down the toilet. -Rocko

The Detroit Cobras

"Baby"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

What's not to like on the Detroit Cobra's latest effort "Baby"? This is what rock and roll is all about: hefty doses of soul-tinged attitude behind the monstrous back-beat thumping of drummer extraordinaire Kenny Tudrick. There are twenty tracks on the CD, all belted out in style by front gal Rachel Nagy, which are really two discs in one. Tracks 1-13 comprise "Baby" proper, with the remaining seven songs, which feature the imitable Greg Cartwright (Reigning Sound, Compulsive Gamblers, etc) on guitar, comprising the "Seven Easy Pieces" EP that was originally released in 2003 as an import only. However they divide it up, the Detroit-based Cobras are garage band Mecca and show that the hey-day of Soul has no intention of being lost in the conjugal visits of time. "Baby" is an enhanced CD with a pretty hip video for the "Cha Cha Twist", which is a fitting tune because if you wanna do the twist in 2006, ditch the Chubby Checker and pick up a copy of "Baby". I only wish I had the disc on LP. -Bram Riddlebarger

The Deviltones

"Riding the High Horse"

www.deviltones.com

It's all original, southern, redneck, longhair rock. If you like Nashville Pussy, you would like these guys. Fondness of mammary glands not required. -Lisa

The Dirty Royals

"Obsessed America"

www.thedirtyroyals.com

This is pretty repetitious indie-power-Brit-pop that I don't like. It has some slight elements of potential 'ere and there, when it isn't grating on me nerves, but overall it leaves me wanting. Like the fly said to the constipated cow, I can't wait around here all day for shit to happen. - Ben

The Dragline Bros

Self-titled CD

www.myspace.com/thedraglinebrothers

Freakin' hell this is some good shit. The music moves me in my gut (and not in a bad way like when I eat at the Chinese buffet). This band hails from Athens, Ohio, a little college town that is known for it's outrageous Halloween celebrations. You know, I was thinking what exactly is it about this rock band that I really like. It's the guitars. The thick, delicious sounds of the electric guitar coupled with the lapsteel just really sparks something in me. Sometimes the vocals fall out of my favor, but the dark, roots rock reels me back in. So how would I describe the sound so that you can figure out if you want to pick up a copy of this...that's the question. They sound like they should be on Bloodshot Records. They site their influences as The Rolling Stones, The Screaming Trees and Townes Van Zandt. How's that? -Lisa

Dropgun

"Devil Music"

www.dropgun.com

Cranking riff-heavy rock-n-roll with a thick guitar crunch and nods to late 70's punk rock, Dropgun has that sort of seasoned, drink-yourself-into-a-coma feel, which comes from living in Northeast Ohio. It is pretty mid-tempo, but has a knife-across-the-flesh kind of momentum that keeps if from being dull. That, and some bitchin' guitar solos. - Ben

El Jefe vs Demons

Self-titled CD

www.myspace.com/eljefevsdemons

This is really cool, weird, necro-surf type music with a unique streak similar to Cult of the Psychic Fetus, Deadbolt, and Psychocharger (an ex-Psychocharger member would account for that, I reckon). You get 8 songs on this little homemade number to creep you and your neighbors out (and I mean that in a good way). A fine listen. - Lisa

The Ends

"Concrete Dissapointment"

www.dirtnaprecs.com

These guys sound a hell of a lot like the Stitches to me; that same needle-in-arm, haven't changed my pants in a week feel. They may actually be slowed down a tad, and bring little more rock-n-roll than the Stitches, with a bit of Sex Pistols leaking in. They haven't eclipsed their influences, but it's still a fun listen that I'll keep around. - Ben

F-Units

"Reject On Impact"

www.myspace.com/funits

This is super-polished pop punk from NYC. Too polished and pop for my tastes... kind of like a punk rock Journey. Everything about them is adequate but not outstanding. It's so well engineered and sanded down that the result is perfectly smooth, but sterile and uninspired. - Ben

Feronavei

"Diary of A Stone Romantic" (EP)

www.feronavei.com, www.justrockpr.com

"Melodic hard rock" sure to be tearing up the modern rock track charts and playing the alternative radio station festival concert near you. In other words, about as good as a pubic hair sandwich.

- Rocko

Finger Cut Megamachine

Self-titled CD

www.thickrecords.com

Finger Cut Megamachine is an LA-based group led by singer/guitarist/songwriter Devon Williams (ex-Osker frontman). This 2004 self-titled debut disc finds the band still in the throes of direction and formation. With more of a feel-good jam side of neo-folk rock toast than their more recent "Pipe Dreams" EP, Williams none-the-less has a clear penchant for putting a complex message into song. But too much swirling electric guitar work tends to drown the songs' content on songs such as "Backseat" whereas the more-stripped down "Sugary Fruits" and "Open Up the Yellow Cross" provide a better proving ground for the tunes and, not surprisingly, were a

harbinger of things to come from the band as that's where the 2005 "Pipe Dreams" EP finds the FCMM sound. Overall, the eleven song disc still holds up if you're into rainy day music and day tripping and taking long walks at the beach in a loincloth. Or if you just want an engaging backdrop as you sweep your filthy beer- and pizza-stained carpet.

-Bram Riddlebarger

Fingers Cut Megamachine

"Pipe Dreams"

www.thickrecords.com

This is a pretty cool disc. Mellow and sweet from the outset but underneath lies a streak of discontent that seems to want to call the people to thoughtful arms. Nice production without too much grease, singer/songwriter Devon Williams knows exactly where he's going with these tunes (e.g. the coffeehouse, the hash house, the radio). A very west coast record; the cover art is quite appropriate as it recalls thoughts of sitting on a southern Californian beach, staring out at the waves and horizon, wondering what the hell comes next in this life. -Bram Riddlebarger

Fixed Idea

"La Muerte"

www.brokenbonezrecords.com

From El Paso, Fixed Idea capably mix Cumbia, Reggae, Punk, Pop, and primarily Ska, to come up with what they call "El Chuco Ska." They've been around since 1992, and it shows in their song crafting and musicianship. Especially great are the excellent harmonies, which seem to be a lost art in modern Ska... and music in general, actually. I am not a huge fan of most Ska, but this is done extremely well. - Ben

Flatline Rockers

"Neonlights and Hell Calling"

www.empire-music.net, www.flatlinerockers.com

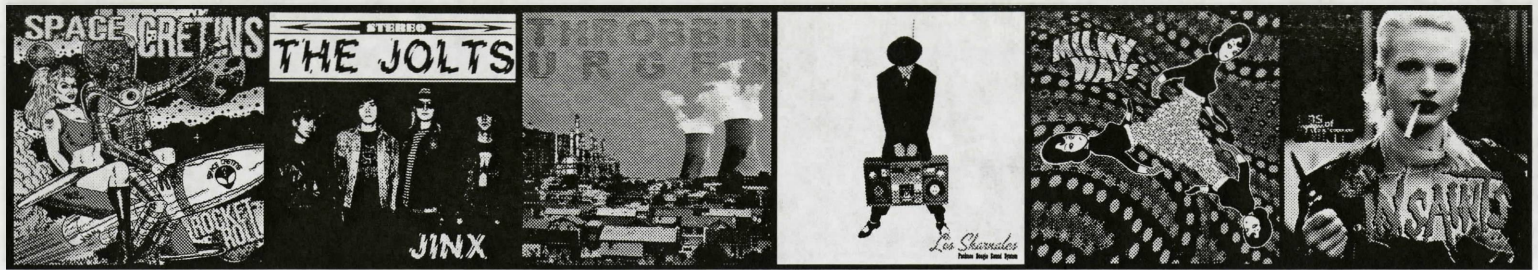
You know, I dread reviewing CDs a lot of times because I am afraid that I am going to put in a disc and hear the same old, clichéd music played out yet again by a different band who may as well be every other band in that genre. That is not the case here. Twelve tracks of Finnish psychobilly that isn't stale or overdone like a burger you left on the grill too long. You get treated to a well-rounded sound that won't have you covering your ears in dismay. While, like so many other bands they cover "Tainted Love," they are saved by the fact that they also do an awesome cover of "Everybody's Lovin' My Baby." There are a lot of top notch originals on here, but my favorite is the instrumental "Rise From the Grave." I look forward to listening to this more in the future. -Lisa

The Forty-Fives

"High Life High Volume"

www.yeproc.com

I've seen the Forty-Fives a few times and liked them, but I wasn't really too blown away by them. This disc, however, delivers some high quality southern garage rock produced by the prolific Jim Diamond. Its good-time party music vibe has left me seething with optimism for a new era of enlightenment and promiscuity. However, that does mean I will need to do more sit-ups. - Ben



The Four Slicks

Self-titled CD

www.myspace.com/thefourslicks

If you're on Myspace (and I KNOW you are), you know how annoying it can get to be solicited by a dozen bands on a daily basis. This is especially a problem for me, because as soon as bands see the words "radio show" on my profile, they immediately think to themselves, "OH GOOD! This girl obviously needs to be enlightened and encouraged to play only the best bands on her show, which is where I come in!" (*Note to 99% of bands: You should stop thinking this.) So when I got the message in my inbox from a band called the Four Slicks, I must admit that it was not entirely well-received. I opened it and quickly saw that the message was being sent from a guy named Jon, formerly of the Ripoffs. Ok, so we play the Ripoffs on our radio show, and it's good stuff. He had my attention. Jon explained that after the breakup of the Ripoffs, he moved to Paris where he joined the Four Slicks. He described them as "rockabilly garage," but after hearing their latest CD I found it to be straight-up rocknroll, almost Devil Dogs in style. Not that I welcomed the fact that the upright bass was getting the backseat as far as my ears were concerned, but it seems that rockabilly is a bit of an acquired taste and I had high hopes that this band would appeal to garage/rock fans without alienating them with visions of pompadours and leopard-print creepers. The self-titled album, out on Slick Records, promises "17 new wild tunes from the kings of greasy punk" and in no way disappoints. The CD insert is splattered with images of hot rods and scantily-clad pinup girls, a perfect compliment to the minute-and-a-half scorchers about fast girls, fast cars and even faster living. There are no less than 7 old rocknroll/rockabilly covers, spanning from 1958-1965. Making an appearance is Johnny Horton's "Got the Bull By the Horns," as well as a version of "You Lied to Me Honey" by Junior Gravelly and the Rock-a-Tones that is delivered with such high-octane speed that I had to check the CD to read what words were actually being sung. Originals like "No Money No Job" are a modern-day rocknroller's anthem, while "56 Jewel" kickstarts the CD like a fist to the teeth where the knuckle tattoos read "YOUR" and "FACE." One only need look to the liner notes for a band roster to see just how serious these guys are about rocking and rolling in style: each member is listed by position in the band, as well as sweet ride — including '63 Ford Falcon, '56 Dodge and '50 Ford. A day at the dragstrip with the old man's souped-up Chevy couldn't touch the raw energy and pumping adrenaline rolled into this CD. - Erin Rahel [Editor's note: Erin co-hosts a great radio show called "Hot Trash" at: www.wcsb.org. Check it out, or be a damned fool!]

Frontkick

"Underground Stories"

Bronco Bullfrog Records, www.frontkick.net

Melodic punk outta Berlin, Frontkick lean toward the more catchy pop street sounds like Bombshell Rocks or Voice of A Generation. A little sugary for the die hard streetpunks, but the younger Warped Tour crowd could do worse than pick up on these

guys. There's a video for "36 Guns" on this disc too and they cover "Career Opportunities." - Rocko

Gein and the Graverobbers

"The Passion of the Anti-Christ"

www.necro-tonerecords.com

And the Lord said unto thee "Buyest this compact disc or be damned to a life of "Sex in the City" reruns, armpit stains on every shirt, and chronic diarrhea." So if you don't want to live a horribly wretched life, perhaps even worse than it already is, you better get this disc. I mean, what's not to like? Amazing, original, dark, and creepy instrumental surf to rock out to while sacrificing helpless animals, beating innocent children, or making prank phone calls to your high school Geometry teacher. So get out there and purchase this CD! That is, unless you want to lead a cursed life. -Lisa

The Generators

"Excess Betrayal...and our Dearly Departed"

www.fiendmusic.com

Honestly, I don't have much to favorably compare this against. The best I can come up with would be to ask, 'Do you like the later DKM sorta streetpunk?' Just keep in mind, this is a West Coast interpretation and is a tad bit over-produced. Not poppy, necessarily, but you can sure as fuck see it from here. This might be a good intro for kids who like AFI to get into something heavier, but otherwise, I'm not sure where the fan base for this might be lurking. Has some late Cali punk roots shooting up... but that doesn't turn my crank.

- Joe Pacak

G.G. Allin & Antiseen

"Murder Junkies"

www.tkorecords.com

Personally, I am a fan of the earlier GG Allin music from when he was with the Jabbers, and I am also a big fan of his Criminal Quartet days. His voice on this album with Antiseen, however, is real harsh and the music is monotonous. That may appeal to a lot of the more crustier fans of GG, but for me I prefer the more musically crafted songs. Actually, I do like "Dirty Love Songs" a lot too, and there was terrible musicianship on that album. However, it was very catchy and had a sense of humor that isn't present here. I can appreciate watching him receive a beer enema from the ass of a skanky ho as much as any GG fan, but something about this album isn't capturing my interest musically or otherwise. There are a few exceptions, though. For example 'Cock on the Loose', 'Laying Up with Linda' and 'Outlaw Scumfuc' are three cuts that make the grade. -Lisa

Ghostwriter

"Darkest Hour"

www.endofthewest.com

This is the second CD by Ghostwriter, and he has retained the gut-wrenching existential torment that made his first disc such an intense and somewhat draining experience. It's not light listening for your next pool party, and he doesn't mean it to be. His songs bluster and brood with a dark emotional sincerity, carrying both the self-loathing and anti-social rage of someone who has trouble finding contentment. I can relate. As a one-man band,

there is no buffer to his artistic expression, which manifests in a sort of torture-throated Americana that comes straight out of a broken heartland. - Ben

The Goldstars

"Purple Girlfriend"

www.pravdamusic.com

I love almost all ten of the tracks on this disc. Organ laden, garage, psychedelia with smart lyrics and a raw edge that makes this a real fun listen. Admittedly, I do skip past a few tracks, but the other songs make up for the ones that fall flat. Some of the best tunes on here are "D.M.V.," "Comin' Home Baby" (which is an awesome instrumental), "It's All About You," "Purple Girlfriend" (another kick ass instrumental), and "One + One". A plea bargain has been struck, and this disc will serve some time in my player for sure. - Lisa

Adam Grant

"In The Name of Liberty"

www.myspace.com/adamgrant

Rock music for college freshmen. Enough pop to keep the girls listening, and enough of an alternative garage sound to make them think they found something really cool and edgy. He is less wussy than the picture of him on the CD would lead you to believe (with his Oasis haircut, black suit jacket and trendy beard), but not by much. - Lisa

Hard Skin

"Same Meat Different Gravy"

www.knock-out.de

This is a (loving) skinhead parody band that really captures the feel of the early 80's Oi! style, with sing along choruses for hoisting beers in the air and pretty guitar melodies to balance the ugly vocals. The parody comes from these guys knowing the ridiculousness of the lyrics, whereas so many other bands seem to be utterly clueless. They take it over the top, which made me piss myself when I heard "I put my hand on my heart and tell you it's true, I'll be a skin, skin, skin skinhead for you." Song titles like "Two Chords-Two Fingers" and "Still Fighting Thatcher" alone are worth the price of admission. Actually an enjoyable album, so "stop thinking and start drinking." - Ben

Hateful

"Diamond Among The Coal"

www.rebellionrecords.com.nl

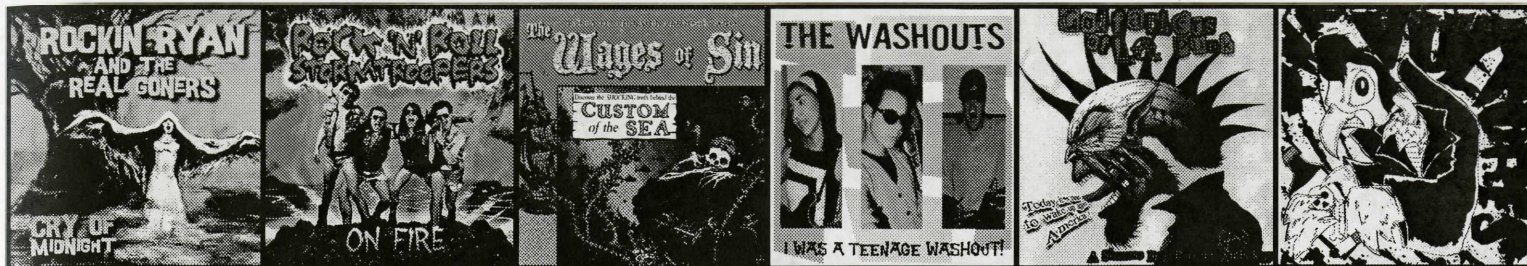
A three-piece of older guys doing '77 style songs in the vein of the Sham Pistols if they had ever released an album. Not very driving musically, but a real workman like effort. The songs are consistent stylistically without jumping genres. - Joe Pacak

Headwound

"Ginmill"

www.hauntedtownrecords.com

It is not everyday that you hear a hard-drinking Oi group cover John Denver, let alone do it well as a bottle-throwing barroom singalong. You might also not expect the hidden track to be from the *Sound of Music* either, but New Jersey's Headwound certainly aren't serving up run-of-the-mill fare. They have the blue-collar beer guts and sneering punk rock power that makes them one of better bands that the genre has to offer. They're not trying to write confessional poetry here; they just craft fun songs



about the merits of beer, missing Sloppy Seconds, and wanting to be a forklift operator. All remain tuneful and catchy, yet flex enough muscle to keep from going soft. This one should be in the jukebox of every liquor establishment with sweaty patrons and mud on the floor. - Ben

Hellbats

"Dark 'N' Mighty"

www.hairball8.com

Metal infused psychobilly for the dark-hearted. This reminds me of '80's metal with an upright, especially "Deep In Your Mind." The instrumental title track is excellent, as well as the recreational insanity of "Asylum Park." Most all the tracks are rockin' with the exception of a couple that prefer to drone on. If you like Venom, I bet you'd like this. -Lisa

Hetten Des

"Cowboys with Cojones"

www.drunkabilly.com

I try to be objective and scientific when it comes to reviewing cds, I really do. But this one, I just flat out, shamelessly love. It's a well done, energetic mix of psychobilly, punk, rockabilly, country, and humor. Lots of clichés - drinkin', girls, trouble, yee haws... But it's so catchy and so well done, it's not annoying. It works. Hetten Des is from Belgium, and has its roots in the Ratmen, Sin Alley, and Donkey Diesel, so their members have been around awhile. Sadly, right now though, Hetten Des is either on hiatus or breaking up. All the more reason to hunt down this CD NOW. Their singer (Koen Verbeek) sounds like the guy with the really deep voice from the Halo Benders, but Verbeek has a much better range and a little twang and crackle. The production has just enough distortion on the guitar, just enough country sound. There are some swell covers - "Thirteen" by Danzig, "Big River" by Johnny Cash, Hank Williams' "Alone and Forsaken", and "Ace of Spades", to name a few. The band seems to really get behind their originals more though. There's the simple bouncy love song "I.C.U." (Say it out loud), the song that combines love and boozing "Drinkin' About You", and the uplifting "Hallelujah (Praise the Lord)", and four other gems. - Carol High Hair

The Hexters

"Freaks With the Savage Beat" & "Buried Alive!"

www.gollygeerecords.com

I hope I never meet the kind of person who wouldn't like this CD. That kind of person, if in fact one does exist, would likely suffer from painfully engorged colon polyps and sniveling idiocy. What you have here is savage 60's inspired rock'n'roll building on foundations laid by The Sonics, The Who, Paul Revere, as well as more current savagery proffered by the likes of the The Mummies, etc. Although it has been done before, it is rarely done this well. Fronted by Ryan Sagat of Rockin' Ryan & the Real Goners, and featuring fellow rockabilly statesman Rip Carson on guitar, there is a hint of those roots in some songs, but on the whole, this is a whole 'nother beast. I always thought that Ryan had one of the better voices in rockabilly, but here he shows he can really up the ante with a truly feral howl. The music ranks a solid 9.5 on the Richter scale with its nearly cataclysmic amounts of shake, and I doubt there has been a more combustible display since the

Hindenburg went down in flames in 1937. It's like a soundtrack to delinquency, where youthful energy gets directed down the wrong path. The CD inhabits the tropical climate where danger and fun mix in the syrupy heat, and the virile beat becomes viral. Best to go at it without protection and love as you live: primitive. The "Buried Alive" disc offers 27 tracks from two different live shows with a ton of new songs, which makes it a nice snack until the next studio course. - Ben

The Hi-Frequencies

"Money Isn't Everything"

www.teenregimerecords.com

This is excellent traveling music. I listened to this while driving through Western Texas towards El Paso on a sunny day, and it was perfect. It is kind of like what would happen if Chuck Berry and CCR did a garage R&B/surf album together. The guitarist has a great, fluid style and half the songs are really good 60's sounding instrumentals that are perfectly put together to not be too sparse, yet not too brash either. A great sense of pacing gives the songs an atmosphere and depth without getting too drawn out. The singer pretty skilled as well, and the only song I didn't care for was last track. - Ben

High Tension Wires

"Send a Message"

www.dirtnaprecs.com

High Tension Wires make catchy punk with memorable pop hooks and liberal doses of bounce and B vitamins to give it a vital hue. Then they take a file and sharpen up the edges so it comes off with more of a garage vibe instead of teaming with Warped Tour tedium. Puts me in the mind of the Marked Men, actually. Lyrically, they appear to have one up on the competition as well, especially with a song called "I ♥ MAO Inhibitors." With only one song on this being skip-worthy, I would say this is a keeper for sure. - Ben

The Hollow Points

"The Black Spot"

www.disasterrecords.com

I guess I'd say this is melodic streetpunk that occasionally veers into hardcore pacing and even includes mandolin on a couple tracks. A lot of reviews have been comparing them to Social Distortion, and while I can kind of hear that in the guitar melodies, I don't think it is much help in describing them overall. That said, I've got no better reference to offer, which suggests that they are accomplishing more than an awkward amalgamation of their musical heroes. In addition, the lyrics are substantive as they proffer intelligent social commentary throughout a dark album issued forth at a dark time in history. The band seems disillusioned not only with the actions of our government, but also with the mentally lazy citizens who support it. Some bands approach political subject matter with humor and sarcasm to avoid coming off as preachy and self-important. In contrast, the Hollow Points avoid preaching by taking a more personal route and putting some genuine feeling into these songs filled with sleepless desperation. While this really isn't my favorite style of music, it is starting to win me over despite my initial reluctance to keep listening. I may not be 100% sold on this yet, but I will definitely be

coming back to it. Something about this is keeping me interested: making what I thought would be a bad review turn out in the end to be decidedly positive. - Ben

Horace Pinker

"Texas One Ten"

www.thickrecords.com

Horace Pinker is a four-piece pop-punk band with some MTV-like aspirations that could find some welcome fans in a feel-good Hollywood blockbuster sorta way. So if you like your punk rock pancake with lots of syrup, pick up a copy of "Texas One Ten" and get your fill. - Bram Riddlebarger

Horror of 59

"Screams from the Cellar"

www.horrorof59.com

You like horror? You like rock? You want to find a band that can merge the two without being a rip off or have songs seem to drudge on forever and ever and ever? Today is your lucky day because Horror of 59 fits the bill to your musical desire. With the delicious Bob Noxious on vocals, Horror of 59 plays snappy, gore-inspired tracks to put a chill up your spine and a tap in your toe. Another plus is Bob can actually sing...and talent in the vocal department is getting harder and harder to come by these days. Thirteen tracks are present on "Screams from the Cellar" and I don't skip past many. - Lisa

Hotrod Boogie

"Last Train to Chuco"

www.brokenbonezrecords.com

Seven all original rockabilly tracks by a rockin' trio who remain a mystery to me. I tried looking them up on the web to see where they were from or anything like that...but I could not find anything. The web site given doesn't seem to work either. But I must say that I really like this band. They are upbeat, fun, and make me squirm where I sit with dancing anticipation. They have hand clapping! They have instrumentals! They have kick ass guitar! Get this unless you have a wooden leg. - Lisa

Hudson Falcons

"La Famiglia"

www.streetanthemrecords.com

What can I say, these guys are in a class of their own, I mean besides working class. Total originality, heartfelt lyrics, excellent music....There is more of a rock feel to the music with melodies that sort of creep up on you. The highlight is obviously the well thought out lyrics. The song Labor Day is about factory workers getting laid off while CEO's get big bonuses, a definite injustice that happens way too often. My favorite on here is "No one gets left behind" a song dedicated to US military personnel everywhere, especially the US Army Rangers. I really appreciate the fact they had the balls to come out and make a song like this, all the radical "punks" will hate them for it if they don't already. Of course we all know they already hate real working class bands like the Hudson Falcons. - Jeff Lamm



The Insaints

"Sins of Saints"

www.disasterrecords.com

The Insaints existed from 1988-1994. Fronted by Marian Anderson, a dominatrix and sex art performer, they were widely known in concert venues and courtrooms for their extremely lewd stage antics. When was the last time you saw a singer get fisted onstage while the band played "Pipeline?" Unfortunately, Marian is no longer with us since she died in 2001 of a drug overdose.

However, the music of Insaints lives on, and is compiled here. A lot of songs sound pretty good, but on the whole I think many probably worked better in the chaotic milieu of a live show. The guitars are thick and metalish, and her vocals really aren't bad, preferring to sing rather than get all throaty or scream a lot. The enduring appeal of this is that it is delivered with some a real fire inside, and comes off like a cathartic discharge rather than just something for fun. - Ben

Jackknife Powerbombs

"Set To Go!"

www.jackknife-powerbombs.com

Since rock'n'roll has been re-introduced to the punk rock habitat over the last several years, most bands have brought to a 70's kind of vibe to it. Jackknife Powerbombs instead bring an 80's cock rock guitar vibe. I think it may actually be more of an Iron Maiden sound melded with Street Punk. Some pretty good songs on here, all professionally recorded. I'm not in love, but we can be casual friends. - Ben

Jerry King & The Rivertown

Ramblers - "A Date With..."

www.jerrykingandtherivertownramblers.com

This is an excellent piece of work right here folks. It jumps, it croons, and it moves. A real eclectic mix of tracks from 50's genre styles of pop to hillbilly bop to flat out rockin'. Superb musicians with top notch vocals laid out by Jerry King. The songwriting is to be appreciated as well. With no track having that contrived Rockabilly feeling to it. You will not hear "I gotta date ...pick her up at 8" at all on this. There are a lot of Rockabilly bands out there in my opinion that have 1 or 2 of the qualities you will find on "A Date With Jerry King," but fall short in the songwriting or vocals. This one is sure to win over anyone who picks it up. - Pat May

Joecephus & The George Jonestown

Massacre - Self-Titled CD

www.myspace.com/joeykillingsworth

Their sound is predominantly country mixed with influences ranging from metal, jazz, bluegrass and punk. It's nice to hear a fresh take on good, old-fashioned country every once in a while that reminds me of something Merle Haggard would approve of. The guitar is often nice and twangy, and some tracks incorporate steel guitar. The electric bass sometimes has a jazz feel to it, which adds uniqueness to their sound. While I'm not a fan of the pot leaf motif on the cover, and the vocals are just adequate, the band does come off with an appealing honesty, and songs like "Citified" touch on the sort of witty songwriting that makes for enduring country music. -Lisa

The Jolts

"Jinx"

Thejolts@hotmail.com

While there is nothing terribly original by these Canadian upstarts playing a sort of Johnny Thunders-type rock-n-roll, it is done very, very well. I really like the vocals, and the songs are neither half-baked or overdone. This porridge is just right. A 5-song EP well worth having. - Ben

Los Kikes

Self-Titled CD

www.sshakingrecordss.com

These guys describe themselves as "the most malignant band in Israel" and I have to say, that is quite possible. This sounds completely fucked up. I can't think of how to describe them...like trashed-out open sore ugliness that somehow comes off as the greatest thing since panty liners with wings. Profane black metal and surf are the main culprits, with some garage psyche and noisy rock'n'roll also crammed into that messy lo-fi blender. A dark, echoey, and unholy racket that doesn't sound like anyone else I can pinpoint (maybe a little Lamps in the vocals). -Ben

King Drapes

"Rockabilly Rules!"

www.raucousrecords.com

This Finnish trio puts a fresh spin on rockabilly and saves it from a doom worse than the recycled "20 Flight Rock" pit of hell. The female takes the lead on vocals and electric bass, and her singing is quite beautiful, although it may just be that I'm a sucker for accents. The more I listen to this the more I am taken in by the reverb and the peculiar quality of the music. As each song passes I find myself falling more in love with this disc. Devoted traditionalists may want to pass this by, but then I will throw eggs at you and call you a loser. -Lisa

Kings of Nuthin'

"Over the Counter Culture"

www.sailorsgraverrecords.com

The Kings of Nuthin' are one of those bands whose success is surprising. They don't pander to any particular scene, yet have been embraced by many of them. Having started off aiming to be a rockabilly band, there are still some aspects of that in their music, and they are well-respected in that scene. Having way more aggression than the average rockabilly band, however, they appeal to the psychobilly scene without resorting to songs about graveyards and zombies. They also have shared more than a few bills with punk rock bands of every ilk, belying what was probably their first love. They appeal strongly to all these different music scenes, all while playing what is probably best described in their own words as "punk rock rhythm and blues." This newest CD shows them in the mood to do covers of some of their favorite songs, mostly British punk, in this style, with 8 of the 14 songs being covers. They do songs by Peter & The Test Tube Babies, Eater, Anti-Nowhere League, Blitz, and Stiff Little Fingers. This choice would make them risk being seen as a novelty act interpreting old favorites. However, instead of this happening, the covers manage to retain the immediacy and edge of

the originals while putting their own stamp on them. In addition, the choices of songs are not the same tired covers overdone by every hackneyed stateside Anglophile Oi band. They don't do "So What," "Alternative Ulster," or "New Age." While they do "Banned From The Pubs," it seems obvious this choice was based on common experience, and they do have the good taste to sing it as "banned from the bar" as proud Bostonians should. The other covers here go back a bit further in 50's R&B with great cuts by The Nite Riders, Hank Ballard & the Midnighters, and "I Smell A Rat" by songwriters Leiber & Stoller, originally done by Big Mama Thornton. Furthermore, the originals on this disc more than carry their weight, making me think it may be better to do well-chosen covers in an inspired way than to pad an album with new songs hastily recorded and not yet ready to be released. Sounds like quality control to me. When KON do pen a song, the lyrics tend not to be fatuous tripe, but actually have some thought and artistry to them. The writing has a hard-bitten truth to it, complete with anger, regret, disappointment, and discontent... all channeled through the damaged throat of frontman Torr Skoog and backed by some amped-up barrelhouse blues. The musicianship and compositions are getting better and better with every release. Nothing is there that doesn't need to be, and what is there is expertly executed. I am also very pleased with the guitar tone, which is much better on this album. All in all, this CD is something I'll be coming back to, and it is sure to liven up the party. - Ben

Knockout Pills

"1+1=Ate"

www.estrus.com

At first I was a little resistant to this album, thinking it wasn't as good as their debut disc on Dead-Beat Records. Upon further listening and after much consultation with my attorney, however, I am prepared to publicly testify that this disc is actually far from a disappointment. It just shifts a little more toward the power-pop end of the garage spectrum. That said, the engine is still firing on all 4-tracks, with a tank full of rock'n'roll and plenty of punk in the trunk. I'd put them in a similar camp as the Marked Men, and that is good company to keep. - Ben

The Koffin Kats

"Straying From The Pack"

www.hairball8.com

Whereas on their last album ("Inhumane") I thought Vic's vocals were a bit forced, that is not the case here. With the addition of a new drummer and the kinks worked out on the vocals, this is quickly becoming a favorite album. Intense, fast, gutsy psychobilly that will slap you across the cheek. Well written songs, varied tempo and skilled musicians make this a must have. You will love the guitar. You will love the bass. You will love the drums. You will love the pine tree air freshener that hangs from the rearview window of their van. You will love this album. -Lisa



The Krunchies

"In De Winkel"

www.criminaliq.com

I actually bought this disc, so I don't feel obligated to give a full review, other than to say this is blazing hardcore in the classical sense, faster than a bullet through a manic depressive's head and with a garage feel to the guitars. I mean, this shit is seriously rapid. Damn. The vocals go back and forth between male and female, and aren't exactly subdued. I can't imagine a fan of punk rock not liking this, but then again, I never expected that lump in my man-breast to be cancer. Whatever. This is the goods. — Ben

Labor Force

"...True to the Blue"

www.laborforce.cc

After you do reviews for a good while you get really tired of press sheets touting Band X's delusions of having a strikingly revolutionary sound that defies categorization and will usher in a grand new epoch in musical history. Modesty is an underrated virtue, especially among the talentless. A big ego is my least favorite trait in bands and people in general. That's why I was immediately won over by Labor Force's ability to keep things in perspective. They don't claim to be ground-breaking virtuosos, or to be "straying far from the obligatory three chord standard usually associated with the genre." Instead, this is just great blue-collar punk rock featuring catchy sing-along choruses with well-balanced melody and aggression. It kind of reminds me of Pistol Grip, Tommy Gutless, or the first Dropkick Murphys' album (sans the Irish influence). The lyrics espouse the usual working-class ethics and plight, but come off with tons of sincerity and zero pretense. While there is not a lot of variety between songs, the disc goes by very easily on the ears. I'll take this band over any of the street punk bands out there barking their banality without hooks. — Ben

Larry And His Flask

"Dancin' Tonight"

larryandhisflask@hotmail.com

Five idiots. Five instruments. One goal: fucker rock and roll! At least that's what these guys claim. A four song EP of some pretty decent street rock with a slight metal flavor. Unique riffs and some kick ass drumming make these guys a little different from the rest. — Lisa

Th' Legendary Shack Shakers

"Believe"

www.yeprock.com

As soon as the first track started to play I said to myself "Now this is going to be a purely amazing album," and I was not disappointed. While not every song is as astonishing as "Agony Wagon," you will by no means be saddened or regret having spent your money on this album. Southern gothic rock with a healthy dose of evangelical spirits and a splash of blues, punk and country make this a must have shot of heterogenous Appalachian moonshine. — Lisa

Levi Dexter & The Ripchords

"Victims of Kool"

www.raucousshop.co.uk

Formed after Levi's parting with the Rockats, an early version of the Ripchords very briefly featured a

pre-Stray Cats Brian Setzer. However, he was gone before the Ripchords formalized their line-up and began recording. No worries, however, since Danny B. Harvey capably handles the guitar duties on these sessions recorded in 1980-81, some only now being properly released. Interestingly enough, in 1981, Danny left the Ripchords, moved to New York, and to join the Rockats (now called the Secret Hearts). While this version of the Ripchords only lasted a short time, their sound was tight, spirited, and certainly influential to the best elements of the current neo-rockabilly scene. The songs here are well-produced (not glossed-up or amateurish), and are upbeat, fun, and easily stand the test of time. Hard to sit still and listen to this with scowl on your face, unless that stick up your ass has firmly taken root. — Ben

Live Fast Die

"Bandana Thrash Record"

www.dead-beat-records.com

At times these guys remind me a little of the Jabbers, The Ramones, and the Stooges. The songs are often catchy, funny, very lo-fi and sloppier than day three at a hedonism resort. I am really enjoying this. With songs about amputation, shitting the bed, and their love of weapons, how can you go wrong? — Ben

Lucky Punch

"Kick Up a Hullabaloo"

www.dead-beat-records.com

These guys are from Munich and have a big rock sound that harkens back to the 70's while adding a little modern flair, causing a lot of comparisons to the Hellacopters and Supersuckers. In general, I prefer less polish in the production, but this is so well played and skillfully done that they still manage to raise a nice ruckus for the most part. There are some memorable guitar hooks and a little blues shuffle and harmonica in parts too. As I listen it grows on me more. Not bad. — Ben

Mad Marge and the Stonecutters

Self-titled CD

www.stonecuttersmusic.com

The all-too-rare female-fronted psychobilly band that also doesn't serve up the usual horrible third-rate street punk vocals or a bad Popeye imitation ... nice! The musicians are exceptional, especially the bass player. Godless Wicked Creeps are probably the most apt musical comparison, but with Gwen Stefani singing. As odd as that may sound, the combination is not a volatile one. A pretty impressive debut in a genre filled with mostly terrible cookie cutter psychobilly. — Ben

Mad Sin

"Dead Moon's Calling"

www.sailorsgrave.com

Mad Sin have been playing psychobilly since the late 80's, and for my money, their best album was 1988's "Chills and Thrills in a Drama of Mad Sin and Mystery." It just has that classic psycho sound: the guitars had the requisite twang, the tempo was breakneck, and there was an unmistakable energy to the proceedings. This still has quite a lot of energy, but it just seems too neat and tidy. Along the way they started to incorporate thicker metal guitar tones, better production, and pop-punk hooks - all

with mixed results. Additionally, this disc almost seems as if they are trying to piggyback on the success of their peers, the Nekromantix. Or maybe this latest shift in their sound can better be explained by the addition of the (sorely missed) Nekromantix guitar player, Pete Sandorf, who also contributes the great backing vocals here that he was known for in his former band. The blurring of lines and exchange of DNA between these two psychobilly mainstays isn't necessarily bad, as they pull it off quite well, but it just doesn't make "Dead Moon's Calling" leap out as something special to take note of. It is decent and highly listenable, and I am sure they are still very good live, but to me it just feels a little bit hollow. — Ben

Mark Pickerel & His Praying Hands

"Snake in the Radio"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

Boy, was I excited to get this disc in my hands. I've long been a fan of Mark Pickerel's drumming since back in his Screaming Trees' days and have followed his work with such notable artists as Nirvana and Mark Lanegan (he's also contributed work to Brandi Carlile and Neko Case). Pickerel steps into the singer/songwriter lights with "Snake in the Radio," his first solo disc that's tinged with alt-country hooks and haunting pedal steel work filtered through a grunge sieve. Notably produced by Steve Fisk, who also produced some of the best Screaming Trees work, Pickerel's got a low baritone that, along with the general vibe of the disc, calls to mind the superb "Year of Mondays" record by another ex-Lanegan sideman, Mike Johnson. "I'll Wait," a fine ballad, stands out and also lays off the vocal doubling which is present on the first three tracks. Not that the opening tracks don't have merit, but it's nice that the stories are told with one voice from there on out. It's like the first uncertainty in the beginning of a new relationship giving way to confidence, standing and strength. Let's hope there's more to come because "Snake in the Radio" is a stellar first offering. (Note to Bloodshot: Oh yeah, and it's acoustic damn it! Acoustic! See linear notes for anal-retentive typo outrage and correct for the second pressing.) — Bram Riddlebarger

Thee Merry Widows

Self-titled EP

www.myspace.com/themerrywidows

As an original, all-female psycho band from Oakland, California, these ladies site Demented Are Go, The Misfits, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and The Runaways as their influences, and I would say this is pretty accurate. There's only four tracks on this little number and I am left wanting more. While catchy and aggressive aren't good things when it comes to plasmodial parasites, they are quite good things here. I had the chance to catch a few of their songs live at Heavy Rebel a few years ago and it was quite enjoyable as well. I'd like to hear a full-length from these ladies for sure. — Lisa

The Meteors

"The Lost Album"

www.raucousrecords.com

For me some Meteors stuff is top shelf goods, while some is half-assed or worse. Fortunately, this album is the former in a big way. Recorded in 1980, this is

the original line-up doing 16 rowdy rockabilly hits that would later spawn the psychobilly genre in England. Even though a sizable chunk of these tunes are covers from the 50's, the energy and performance puts them in a class of their own. While psychobilly today has largely devolved into less talented bands with heavy distortion flinging their uninspired turds at the public, this perfectly lo-fi session boasts a band with a real wild streak banging on reverby guitars with a snarling indolence. Highly recommended. - Ben

The Milky Ways

Self-titled CD

www.alivenenergy.com

From Montreal, the Milky Ways could've come straight out of the 1960's with keyboards and narcotics in tow. There is a "Back from the Grave" garage vibe with an authentic-sounding production, and a touch of psychedelic transcendentalism that makes it hypnotic and inspiring. Puts me in the mind of a less wacked-out Black Lips featuring ex-members of The Spaceshits, Del-Gators, and The Sexareenos. Cool stuff. I am digging it. - Ben

The Mind Controls

Self-titled CD

www.dirtnaprecs.com

The first song on the CD is pure house party punk rock at its hairy knuckled best. The Mind Controls are fronted by Mark Sultan (BBQ, Sexareenos, Spaceshits), and they whip out some crude, pulse-racing, rudimentary rock'n'roll that'll help those early morning beers go down much easier. Great vocals, and guitars so dirty they need a shot of penicillin. It is difficult to quantify what sets this apart from the teaming throngs of three-chord yawn punks, but set apart it remains. - Ben

The Misguided

"Home Town Zeros"

www.baselinemusic.net

Pop punk quad from California who are quite good musicians. The bass lines get very intricate and the guitar comes up with some interesting, almost metalish riffs. This is very listener friendly and has strong commercial radio potential. That being said, it's raising my shoulders more than my eyebrows. Can't help but to shrug it off. - Lisa

The Moaners

"Dark Snack"

www.themoaners.com

I am conflicted by this CD. The band is a stripped down two-piece guitar and drums ensemble with a strong Southern feel and big, distorted blues guitar that reminds me of early Immortal Lee County Killers, but slowed down a bit. All that is quite good. Melissa Swingle's (of Trailer Bride) syrupy drawl over top of that is where I am conflicted. Those vocals work PERFECT with Trailer Bride, but for The Moaners I feel she is too restrained. I want to hear her let loose. I want to hear a scream. I want to hear some roughness, some coarseness, some poverty. I want her vocals to match the music. While some may find the dichotomy unique and artistic, it leaves me frustrated and unsatisfied. The music and lyrics are great though. I just am not getting that orgasmic release. -Lisa

Modern Machines

"Take It, Somebody!"

www.dirtnaprecs.com

This is my introduction to a band that I've read a lot about in the last couple years. They are definitely influenced by the Replacements, and have a little bit of a folk undertone to them. The singing veers a little out of my comfort zone, but the songs are generally well put together and seem to have depth

to them. I can almost feel myself liking it, but not quite. - Ben

The Mutants

"Mutants Death Cult"

<http://run.to/mutants>

All the way from Helsinki, Finland comes a band so kick-ass that it is nearly impossible for me to use the written word to fully explain their majestic-ness. According to the press sheet: "take the fuzz of 60's garage beat, some hints of psychedelia from the same bygone era, then add some funky rhythms and grooves from the 70's, and mix that all with damnedly plain rock 'n' roll music and some punk attitude." Follow all that? Seems like a recipe easy to mess up, but you're in good hands here. The Mutants are all instrumental, and they do not get boring. Have sex to The Mutants. Eat a delicious chicken dinner with mashed potatoes while listening to The Mutants. Win the lottery while listening to The Mutants. Live a fulfilled life and owe it all to The Mutants. - Lisa

Nashville Pussy

"Get Some"

www.nashvillepussy.com

I think with bands like Nashville Pussy, you either love them or hate them. However, I am just plain bored with them. It's the same old southern, redneck, Sweaty Teddy tribute rock. I'm sure that if I were a fan of this music I would give them a great review. But usually, even if I don't really like the type of music, I can still appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into it. Yeah, they can play their instruments and they are pretty good at it. But even a competent band can still bore the socks off of me no matter what genre (my god there are a TON of boring ass traditional rockabilly bands that are good musicians). So, I am reporting thumbs down on this disc. I think I need some caffeine now. - Lisa

Nazi Dogs

"Chase The Man"

www.tkorecords.com

The *Killed By Death* sound has really taken off in the past few years and this German band definitely fits in with that rather enjoyable trend. The cover has G.W and Hitler's heads cropped onto an "Easyrider" poster - pretty funny. Like their music, it takes the irreverence of that early period of punk and accurately translates it to our currently fucked up era. By that I don't mean annoyingly political, but blissfully nihilistic. - Ben

The Nebulas

"It's Go! Time"

www.thenebulas.com

If you're a fan of instrumental surf along the lines of Satan's Pilgrims, Man or Astroman?, The Ghastly Ones, etc., then you'll want to take a dip in these shimmering pools of reverb. I personally can never get enough of this stuff. The Nebulas expertly fold up space-time into a tasty cosmological sandwich that you'll be craving long after the CD ends. - Ben

Nobody's Hero

6-song Demo

www.myspace.com/nobodysheronow

For a demo CD these songs sound remarkably full. Nobody's Hero drew on a wide assortment Punk, Oi, and Hardcore influences, and came up with something that sounds like it could have been ripped from 1988. They were fronted by Ehren Daley, who tragically died in New York this year at the age of 33. I knew Ehren for a long time, and although we'd only see each other a few times a year, I still considered him a good friend. He was always passing me cassettes of music that he made on his 4-track at home, and Nobody's Hero was the first real band that he got together since he was in Crowd 13 when he

was a teenager. He was so excited about music that anyone who spoke with him instantly knew it was punk rock that kept him (reasonably) sane while saddled with wife, kids, and work. Most every time we'd be hanging out, alcohol would be involved. He was hilarious and a sometimes a handful when he was drunk (chainsaw to a telephone pole, anyone?). I remember him getting obliterated at a Memorial Day party at my house. He tried to dive through a tractor tire swing while it was in motion, missed, and knocked himself completely unconscious. Then he got up, grabbed another beer, verbal accosted some people, told a long rambling joke, then passed out in my backyard, pissing all over himself in the afternoon sun. Good times! Another time he rode a tricycle through a Cleveland neighborhood at 8am on Sunday morning, completely naked. Now that's something to see on your way to church, and it's funny stuff like that which I will always remember. There are many more stories, but I can't really tell them here. Ehren was always extremely supportive of Rock N Roll Purgatory and made me feel like it was something worthwhile. I hadn't published an issue since he gave me this demo CD probably 2 years ago, and know he really wanted to see a review. I also wasn't able to fly back to Ohio for his funeral, so this is really my only way of saying goodbye. Rest in Peace, Ehren. You are sorely missed. - Ben

Nora O'Connor

"Til the Dawn"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

If there happened to be a neo-folk movement whispering through the grasses of this haunted America that we live in, then Nora O'Connor is right in the midst of it. "Til the Dawn" contains a nice selection of original material as well as contributions from numerous other songwriters including several cuts ("Bottoms" and "Nightingale") from by James Mathus and "That's Alright" by Stevie Nicks. Stand-out tracks like "Love Letters" and "Revolver" showcase the diverse sounds O'Connor can masterly convey with her lullaby-sweet voice. After putting in support time with bands such as The Blacks, Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire (Bird plays fiddle on this disc), Billy Corgan, Jeff Tweedy, and many others, O'Connor has stepped forth in her first solo effort with a commanding presence. -Bram Riddlebarger

The Overdogs

"Live at Reveal" and "Pawnshop Masterpiece"

www.zerooyouthrecords.com

The Overdogs play drunk punk with funny lyrics about porn, Hicks, wrecked bathrooms, and ugly people. The songs are speedy, and these guys obviously don't take themselves too seriously. The music is pretty standard punk stuff, though. Kind of like Sloppy Seconds with faster delivery and more metal guitars. Not hard to listen to, but not essential either. I'd split a case with them, though. - Ben

Parasites

"Retro-Pop remasters"

www.myspace.com/officialparasites.com

This pop punk group has been around for over a decade and this disc is the culmination of their greatest hits which have all been remastered. This is gooey, stick to the bottom of your shoe pop for fans of radio friendly "punk." It IS good for what is is though, and if you like this type of music I'm sure you will love this disc. I can't listen to this without getting slightly nauseated. -Lisa

The Peelers

"Let's Detonate"

www.beercanrecords.com

I liked these guys the instant the first song started shooting delightful Devo rays at me through my car speakers. While the subtle Devo vibe is in there

somehow, this is definitely more of a rough-hewn 70's punk rock with a tackle box full of happy hooks and enticing lures. A real winner you can take home to meet the parents. - Ben

Phantom Creeps / Damien Storm

"Went to Hell" split CD

www.necro-tonerecords.com

The Phantom Creeps feature the evil, reverb-drowned surf guitar stylings of Gein & and the Graverobbers (provided by Gein himself) paired with the vocalist from the Demon Seeds (John Kozik). I don't really think the vocals work on the slow opening track at all, though. Luckily, the second track ditches vocals altogether for a creepy, moody instrumental that could've easily been on a Graverobbers disc. Their next two songs are demos. The first one fares a little better vocally by merit of them being distorted and lower in the mix. The next one is another dark intro that mutates the classic "Sleep Walk" into "Creep Walk," but is still pretty sleepy. Damien Storm offers four songs next, which are poorly recorded "horror metal." He is a solo act with songs that are kind of ethereal... and comical because he sings like a man impersonating a little girl... really, really badly. It is not so bad that it's good, but it is so bad I am laughing my ass off. He has to be going for comedy, and one song would be good enough to make that joke. I will say this, though: it stands out from all the other bands in my review pile. - Ben

The Phenoms

"Home Brain Surgery Kit"

www.beercanrecords.com

This CD could substitute for a defibrillator it's so chock full of life-pumping voltage. Manic, impatient guitars rampage along in a blaring spasm of rock'n'roll muscle. They keep it nice and unrefined so as not to dull the point. Next time I'm in Chicago I'll see if they are playing and go spit beer at them. Cool stuff. - Ben

Psycho Charger

"Curse of the Psycho"

www.psychocharger.com

Psycho Charger have been subjecting the willing masses to their bizarre live shows for years. Whether they are tar and feathering themselves, wearing nothing but raw meat, or splashing around in baby pools filled with breakfast foods, it's always a good time once the obligatory technical problems are worked out. They are a full band playing campy horror-themed rockabilly with distorted vocals backed by programmed industrial rhythms. It comes of lowdown and mean as it churns and grinds along like a redneck robot at the helm of a Sherman tank. There are 20 songs crammed onto this, and while most songs have the same beat, they just sound cool. My favorites are the sped-up crushers like "Roadkill" and "Route 666." This is probably not like anything else in your collection. - Ben

Pug Uglies

"Minimum Wage"

www.rebellionrecords.nl

This is actually good Boston street punk, sometimes bordering on Oi-core. Not slow and plodding, nor is it just a bunch of barking vocals. Instead they keep things riled up like a bar fight with forceful vocals that manage to retain a sense of melody that never goes too far. These guys sound like the real deal: antisocial, drunk and pissed, but also with a good dose of weariness to give it a hard-lived credibility. Worth looking up. - Ben

Radar Station

"Spirit of Desire"

www.wantonrecords.net

Here is a 6 song EP from a 70's inspired rock band

from Finland. The website is all in Finnish, so I couldn't really find any information on them. They sing in English and even have a song called "ScumFuckSexGod" which has some nice, drudgy guitars, groovin' rhythm, and dirty vocals. Not a bad listen at all, just wish I could find some info on them. I'd like to hear some more from these guys. -Lisa

Jon Rauhouse

"Steel Guitar Rodeo"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

I think this is Jon Rauhouse's second album. He's usually a guest player on a myriad of other artists' CDs, but here those artists turn up as his guests, including Neko Case, Calexico, Kelly Hogan and Sally Timms. Both Neko and Kelly provide outstanding vocal assistance, but I was much less impressed with the singing of Sally Timms. The overall feel of the album is a sort of 1930's western swing, but more laid back. It reminds me of something you would listen to while swinging in a hammock on a lazy summer day. There's a cover of the Perry Mason theme and Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse" among others. A couple tracks have male vocals - one being sort of 'cowboyesque,' and another that is sort of garagy with an organ. I liked this album but it didn't strike me as overly exceptional. - Ben

Radio Reelers

"The Next Best Thing"

www.dead-beat-records.com

This is pretty awesome straightforward rock'n'roll played fast and fun. They remind me of the Devil Dogs a lot. My biggest gripe is that the vocals are kind of buried in the mix, which is unfortunate because the singer isn't bad. It's weird too, because it's not exactly a lo-fi recording, so it seems intentional for some reason. Still, a very solid album of upbeat good times. Perhaps not quite as good as their last one (which was mixed better), but I wouldn't kick it out of bed for eating crackers. - Ben

Reducers S.F.

"Raise Your Hackles"

www.reducerssf.com

Pretty much your typical anthemic street punk band. Not terrible, but not all that inspiring either. Kinda like a genre filler band. I think I may have liked their first album better. Pretty ordinary, I won't be listening to it again. -Ben

Reno Divorce

"Naysayers and Yesmen/Laugh Now Cry Later"

www.streetinthemrecords.com

It is uncanny how much this band sounds like Social Distortion straight out of the gate. A lot of bands get saddled with that comparison, but Reno Divorce REALLY sounds like Social D. They have the lyrics, the voice, the guitar melody, and the style. They even do a cover of Johnny Cash as well, but it is thankfully not one of the usuals. They have the country-punk recipe down and serve it up perfectly. It's hard to like, and if you've been let down by Social D as of late, you find these 19 tracks a welcome addition to their catalog. My only gripe is that their greatest strength is emulating someone else. - Ben

Resident Genius / Howard Zinn

"You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship"

www.thickrecords.com

Resident Genius plays politically overwhelmed indie rock here. There's something about "Dear Mr. President" that seems too precious and cute. It's not pissed off. It's light and delicate with vocals that come off smug, like a waify college kid writing a poppy protest song. The rest of their songs suffer the same limpness, although I may agree with their intent. The rest of the CD is pieced together from

talks given by the famed dissident historian Howard Zinn. I enjoyed listening to what he had to say about how history is taught (or not taught) in our classrooms. For example, they *may* learn who was president during the Mexican War, but not how and why the war started, which would then enable the public to understand the government's motives and justifications for imperialism, and allow them to be on guard for similar lies and manufactured incidents in the future. He goes on to talk about the notion of patriotism being conflated with an unquestioning allegiance to government, our passive supplication to our leaders being more machiavellian than democratic, and many more engaging topics too involved to get into here. Whatever your political affiliations, it is good to at least listen to his point of view and consider it. Personally, I've seen Zinn speak before and wish more people would be at least be exposed to these ideas, which might spark some all-to-rare critical thinking. - Ben

Retching Red

"Get Your Red Wings"

http://retchingred.com

This is female-fronted hardcore at breakneck speed that instantly knocked my dick in the dirt. Awesome. I didn't know what to expect from the cover: a supine girl with a devil head in her crotch puking out blood, but this rips and tears like an epesiectomy. Take the lyrics from the first track: "I'm pissing battery acid / that's the kind of bitch I am / Mother Nature made a biohazard alien / strap you down to the floor / straddle your fucking head / gonna let it flow / you're gonna wish you were dead / I'll make you look like you really are / a fiend reborn / twisted and deformed." Imagine that coming at you twenty words per second with a level of rage not just impressive for girl, but impressive period. - Ben

The Returnables

Self-Titled CD-EP

www.dirtnaprecs.com

These are four studio tracks and three live songs by this power pop band from Wisconsin. Sadly, their guitarist, John Glick, was killed in an auto accident after these recordings, and this is a benefit CD for his memorial fund. They drew influence from bands like the Undertones, Replacements, Dickies, and the Buzzcocks, and the result is an endearingly geeky and pretty listenable. - Ben

Rezurex

"Beyond the Grave"

www.fiendforce.de

This psychobilly band fronted by Daniel deLeon (Insaints, Calavera) also features members of Nekromantix, Tiger Army and Cosmic Voodoo. They touch on the usual themes, play very well, and have shellacked it all with a dark pop veneer. Several of the songs stand out, and I like the fact that he doesn't feel the need to affect the typical bad Oi band monster-vocals. There are few standout tracks and some complex arrangements, but my attention started to wane about halfway through. I am sure they would be good to see live, though. - Ben

Rock'N'Roll Monkey & The Robots

"Detroit Trauma"

www.drastic-plastic.com

I love that this CD came with a pamphlet entitled "A Music Journalist's Guide to: Rock'N'Roll Monkey & the Robots." The CD contains some weird psychedelic garage pop songs recorded as 4-track demos with Craig Campbell playing guitar, bass, and casio keyboards. Then it was later mastered with added instrumentation by whoever he was hanging out with at the time. At times I hear a bit of Billy Childish influence, and overall this is oddly appealing... or should I say odd and appealing. - Ben

Rock'N'Roll Stormtroopers

"On Fire"

www.fullbreach77.com

Some things are too much fun to resist, and this German glam-punk band is one of them. Gloriously dumb songs like "Bulldozer On The Loose" and "(We Are) Ready To Rock" connote the 70's rock sounds of Slade, Sweet, New York Dolls, Twisted Sister, Kiss, etc. I was apprehensive looking at the cover with the band in cut-off jean jackets and daisy dukes, but if you can bring the rock like these guys, you can flaunt those hairy man legs all you want. - Ben

Rockin' Ryan & the Real Goners

"Cry Of Midnight"

www.gollygeerecords.com

Here is the second release on Golly Gee Records by Rockin' Ryan, and Jerome Van Gasteren has been replaced on guitar by none other than Rip Carson, who also now works with Ryan in The Hexxers. He is definitely a fantastic player, but I was a big fan of Jerome's work on the previous album. This one is no letdown, though. It has a darker feel to it, and actually provides a sort of middle ground between the sound on his previous album and the Hexxers. Any fan of Rockabilly with a little more meat on the bone will quickly warm up to this. - Ben

Rockin' Paradox

"No Frutti Ma' Fare"

rockinparadox@hotmail.com

Not too sure where in Europe these fellas are from, but they play neo-rockabilly without the 50's guitar tone, and present with a full, modern production. The band also adds a lot of country stylings, bringing a more mature, contemporary feel. Strikingly middle-America sounding for a band coming out of Europe. Doesn't really move me. - Ben

RockitMen

Self-titled CD

Westennrok, <http://cdbaby.com/cd/rockitmen>

The packaging on this self-described rockabilly record has a marked absence of cars, lust or vice which could have been refreshingly nice if the usual suspects weren't solely replaced by the bands unfortunately corny moniker against a straight black backdrop. Sonically, the musicianship is accomplished, but, rather than rockabilly, tends to lean towards a pop-country/blues sound often found at your local county fair or VFW stage. Feel good, rockin' songs dominate with traces of the late great Carl Perkins sprinkled throughout like pepper on eggs sunnyside up. - Bram Riddlebarger

Rosematter

"Real Big Time"

www.myspace.com/rosematter

I feel kind of bad because I've given a bad review to everything that Just Rock PR sent me, but that's the breaks. I was wondering if this CD would showcase the first Emo band to ever win me over. Nope. The first track is instrumental and might make you too drowsy to drive. Then the disc heads right into that weird pop lobotomy sound that goes so well with teen movies and afternoons spent buying shoes at the mall. This is worlds away from mine. I like my music beaten and dragged through gutters, not rolled up in cozy down comforters eating Spaghetti-O's. This is so non-threatening and mind-numbing that it could be used as a local anesthetic. It's like Judy Blume to your Hemingway. I remember liking Hanson more than this. -Ben

The Route 66 Killers

"Murder on Beaver Street"

www.gravewaxrecords.com

There are 15 original surf instrumentals on this disc, all of which aren't necessarily as dark as you'd expect from a horror surf outfit. A lot of songs

have an Eastern-European feel to them or mix in Spanish guitar. All is tastefully subdued, creating mood and atmosphere instead of kitsch. Quite good. - Ben

The Roy Kay Trio

"Rock-A-Way Lonesome Moon"

www.roykaytrio.com

This drummerless trio plays really authentic sounding rockabilly and western swing. The vast majority of songs on here are originals that are done with a real feel for the music rather than simply navigating through all the rockabilly waypoints. The singer's voice is unremarkable, but somehow that keeps it from sounding too perfect and quaint. This one is sure to please traditionalists, yet it avoids all the "hep cat daddy-o" pratfalls that make rockabilly sometimes seem like a caricature of itself. A decent, laid back, Sunday afternoon CD. -Ben

RumbleJetts

Roostina

www.rumblejetts.com

This is the second album of Modern Rockabilly from this Kansas City trio. I didn't dislike this album. I didn't really like it either. Good musicians, good vocals. Everything just good. Nothing really jumps out at me when I listen to it. Not that I'm looking for something specific to jump out at me, but this just kept creeping into the background of my listening attention. - Pat May

The Runs

"Wet Sounds"

www.urbancheese.com

Just looking at song titles like "My Girlfriend's an Australopithecine" and "Your Butt Begs for Butter," I was already infatuated with this band. Unfortunately they dealt me a crushing blow, effectively wiping away those amorous feelings with the bland rag of banality. The music is pretty generic and the vocals are just plain bad. - Ben

Saababanks

Self-titled CD

www.woodenmanrecords.com

Stoner experimental vibe. I can see people either really hating this or liking it mildly, depending on your mood and what you are doing at the time. I am listening to it now through headphones in my cubicle, and it kind of zones me out nicely as I work, but I wouldn't put this on to rock out. The singer kind of yells and is a foreigner to melody, but sometimes it works. They often go into that choppy 2/2 time signature, and sometimes the songs have pretty nice sleepy-time basslines, then get loud and sort of edgy. Nothing really hooks you or stands out in either a good or bad way. I am ambivalent about this. If four songs over the five-minute mark scares you off, then be very afraid. - Ben

Sab Grey & The Royal Americans

"Third Left on the Right"

www.myspace.com/sabgreyandtheroyalamericans

Mostly slow but good country music with a little rockabilly in parts (best displayed on scorcher, "Wasted In DC"), and I am even getting a strong whiff of Bruce Springsteen (not Bruce Dickinson). This is actually really well-played. It might be a bit of stretch for the average punk fan, but I'm sure many of the old Iron Cross (not Iron Maiden) fans will have aged in this direction. Honestly, though, it isn't something I'd put in a lot, as it just doesn't grab me completely for whatever reason. I do love his business card. It says "Sab Grey: Singer/Songwriter, Guitar Player, Carpenter." I think that sums up what does work here: a real honesty and depth to the music. He's not a phony workingman's protagonist with the same old unfelt platitudes. Instead, you get

something that's quintessentially All-American... in the good way. - Ben

The Salt Miners

"A Good Time to be Had"

www.saltminers.com

The first 3 songs on this are brilliant bluegrass with a sort of turn of the century feel to them. Having seen this band and really liked them, I was hoping it would continue in this vein. However, the remainder of the disc slows down into a more mellow country-rock territory that lends itself more to a sleepy NPR folk program. If the album kept the momentum of the first tracks, it would be fantastic. - Ben

The Shitkickers

"Noon's Moonlight"

www.shitkickers.net

If you like your folk/country/bluegrass with a good bit of attitude you'll really like this band from San Jose, California. This disc has 16 tracks that range from decent to full fledged awesomeness. Some of my favorite tracks are "Home," "Rat Farts," "Burn It Down," and "Pacifico Clara." This album was recorded at the famous Sun Studio. They define themselves as 'swampscat, cowpunk, skatestomp, drunken bluegrass fishing music'. I define them as sweet-ass. -Lisa

Shot Baker

"Awake"

www.shotbaker.comnred

I can see some street punk and modern hardcore influences, which has garnered comparisons to bands such as Avail and Pegboy. They seem to inhabit a sub-strain of punk that I'm not too familiar with (I've never heard Avail or Pegboy). The singer has vocal similarities to the singer from the Dropkick Murphies (Al Barr), yet they definitely aren't Irish inflected. The songs are well played and structured, balancing melody and ugliness fairly well. That said, while I recognize they are good, their melodic hardcore style just isn't what gets me aroused these days. - Ben

The Shuteye Train

"Rock and Roll With The..."

www.shuteyetrain.com

A traditional rockabilly trio from Kent, Ohio that doesn't seem to be in business anymore. Thirteen tracks with a handful of covers, including the usual suspects such as "Twenty Flight Rock" and "Blitzkrieg Bop," along with some less typical fare. Their songs are played proficiently and are often pretty enjoyable. There seems to be a modern, wanky bluesy influence to some of them, as well as some straight-up country. My favorite track is the spaghetti western instrumental "It Is What It Is" which also sums up this band nicely. - Lisa

Los Skarnales

"Pachuco Boogie Sound System"

www.losskarnales.com

This Texas Ska band starts off with one of those long, drawn out intro tracks that I dislike. But luckily, what comes after is a quite enjoyable blend of Ska, traditional Mexican music, punk and even hip-hop. Most of the songs are in Spanish and the music maintains coherence while being quite eclectic. A couple of their songs are traditional ("Mariquita" and "Juarez"), and Roger Miret appears on one track, but don't worry, he doesn't make it a Disaster (ha, ha get it?). Over all the CD has a fun mood that would definitely entice me to see them live. -Ben

Social Combat

"Rock N Roll Rebels"

Runnin' Riot Records, www.broncobullfrog.com

First off, nice cover on this one, a traditional tattoo design probably done by one of their friends. Overall

this CD reminds me of The Business: its all well produced, melodic, mid tempo Oi! Lyrics are about 50/50 English and Spanish. There's a pretty cool homage to a dog, possibly a German Shepherd? A song about alcohol, tattoos and Oi!, a winning combination. What can I say, this is very good and even has a Motorhead cover! - Jeff Lamm

Sons of Cyrus

"Monkey Business: Singles & Rarities"

www.dead-beat-records.com

I really like this band: this is pure rock and roll. Twenty tracks, which are mostly all originals except for a few covers, including the Isley Brothers and Rolling Stones. These guys are from Stockholm, Sweden and have been around since the 90's, although they have a slight 70's vintage garage sound. Fans of The Clone Defects will like these guys a lot. While I have already stated that I like them, I feel the need to repeat my fondness of them just so that you realize that this is a CD I would spend my hard earned dollars on in an honest effort to make myself cooler by owning something that really rocks. -Lisa

SOS

"A Guide to Better Living"

www.316productions.com

Seventeen songs on this disc highlighting the "heavy melodic groove machine" that is SOS. This NYC outfit, which has a decade of shows under their collective belt, recruited drummer/engineer Travis Harrison for the production of this disc. Heavy on effects and classic hardcore/rock accoutrements, but lean on meat that I can sink my teeth into, the disc meanders from metal to punk to hardcore but never really reaches the promised land unless you like your manna in the guise of sports bar by day, rock club by night. The short-time track "Hopeless" stands out. -Bram Riddlebarger

Space Cretins

"Rocket Roll"

www.spacecretins.com

It takes a lot to stand out in a world inundated with a proliferation of rock bands. The Space Cretins are a good band, but not cut-yer-balls-off-the-comet-is-coming-to-save-us good. Standard rock-n-roll songwriting with some punk rock leanings & a lot of chorus repetition. Enjoyable if not memorable. -Ben

Spector 45

"We Wanna Go!"

www.spector45.com

Since we received this CD, the band has broken up and reformed as the Delcos. This disc is a great slice of greaser punk pie. They keep one foot on the 1950's floorboards with the other foot heavy on the accelerator. The songs are catchy and fun, rather than being bogged down in the wifebeater-wearing, tough guy aspect of the genre. They do an Elvis cover, which had me rolling down the window to get fresh air, but I was enjoying the ride again with a charged-up version of Buddy Holly's "Rave On." The rest are all originals that keep the spirit of rock'n'roll alive and well. - Ben

Speedswing

Self-Titled CD

www.crazyloverrecords.de

Speedswing, out of Denmark, started out as a spin-off from Disturbance, then they kept adding horns. Their sound, which they call "Speedswing" (Speedswing. It's a band, a CD, AND an entire genre of music!) is a mix of ska, swing, psychobilly and surf. The first track, "Night out with the Boys", shows off some nice guitar work, and "Rock n Roll Island" makes good use of all the horns. "You Take Control" has a good bass line, and "Have More Fun" is the fastest track on the CD. There have been a

few lineup changes since "Speedswing" came out - a new bass player, more horn players - hopefully they'll come out with a full length CD soon. I'm going to play this at parties. It's upbeat, fun to listen to, and will probably get some of my deadbeat friends to actually get up off the couch. - Carol High Hair

Split Lip Rayfield

"Should Have Seen It Coming"

www.bloodshotrecords.com

Some pretty striking vocal harmonies and melodies come from this extreme bluegrass band. Although they are known for their fast and furious approach, with the exception of a few numbers this album keeps the pacing pretty slow. Banjo, mandolin, guitar and tank fiddle join together along with hillbilly vocals to make a decent offering, but I do not feel it is their best. There are 16 tunes here, but not all reach the high water mark that they previously set for themselves. The production lacks character, and some of the lyrics seem a little weak. Still, I wouldn't necessarily pass it by, as they have long been one of my favorites. Even a crappy Split Lip CD is surely a kick in the ass that you will enjoy.

-Lisa

The Sprague Brothers

"Best of the Essbee CD's Vol. 1"

www.thespraguebrothers.com

If seeing Chris "Sugarballs" Sprague's darling face on the cover of this disc isn't reason enough to pick this up then you may as well pick it up for the outstanding music that your ears will hear when you put this in the player. Old timin' music that incorporates rock, country, folk, surf, bluegrass and rockabilly. Chris and his brother Frank put a new spin on old numbers and an old spin on new numbers, which keeps things fresh and alive. There are twenty tunes and you get an informative insert that tells you about each track. I really, really enjoy listening to this and I think you will too. I must admit my favorite is the cover of "Hippy Hippy Shake." There is also a guest appearance by Sugarball's tourmate, Deke Dickerson, on "Praying Mantis." Get this...unless you are allergic to great music. -Lisa

Frank Lee Sprague

"Merseybeat"

www.frankleesprague.com

Frank Sprague has mastered the Mersey sound, and as a fan of this genre of music I couldn't be more pleased to have this CD in my possession. Don't know what Mersey is? Think late 50's early 60's Liverpool rock-n-roll a la The Beatles, The Hollies, Gerry and the Pacemakers, The Searchers, and The Undertakers. Although I'm not in love with every track on here, I am very impressed with the authenticity and reverence that comes through on each original track. There are two bonus tracks, which are the only covers on this whole album. I am amazed. -Lisa

The Stagers

"The Sights, The Sounds, The Fear and The Pain"

www.hauntedtownrecords.com

High-energy rocknroll done right. Reminiscent of older Misfits mixed in with some psychobilly sensibility, this disc includes three videos: "Last Man on Earth", "Warm Summer Day", and "It Conquered the World". Good, melodic lyrics throughout, the disc also includes a cool instrumental, "Last Great Western" and another tune, "Unicorn", which takes the lyrics from a Shel Silverstein poem and puts them to some hi-test action. If you like B-movies, zombies, hot rod cars with flames, corn dogs and biker boots, this disc is probably up your alley. There's a damn funny band photo on the inside traycard to boot as well as some call-to-arms solo acoustic work by singer Joe Blow at the end of the disc. -Bram Riddlebarger

Stitch Hopeless & the Sea Legs

"Stuffing Coffins Since 1977"

www.hairball8.com

This is a tight, fun, band that kept surprising me song after song! Stitch and company got a great sound and aren't afraid to mix it up. Genuine psycho without falling into the conventions that plague many other bands. The guitars are fuzz heavy without being overblown and I can actually discern the fretwork of these fine players! Plus you can hear the thump AND notes of the wild upright by Goredon the Cynic (rather than wasted upright sounding like rubber bands slapped on wet cardboard)! Stitch's singing is a winner too. Somehow he's guttural and melodic at the same time. The skins keep it cool with the right mix of "railroadin'" and balls out rockin'. Sure you got yer horror rockers "Trash Like Me" and "Dead Gray Flesh" that will get you grave stompin' (sounding like some spooky 45 sides spitting out of some fucked up fifties nightmare) but ya also got traditional influenced "Bleed On Me" with some kick ass clean pickin'!!! And a Bruisers cover. Lots of different production angles, tones and sounds coming out of this band/album while staying true to many roots (from RAB to sing along punk) while keeping it psycho heavy. It never gets dull. It all comes together perfectly on "Can't Wait to Get Back Home" that kicks ass and has a lightning guitar lick you can't deny! Trust me you will want this song blatin' outta yer car this summer! - Rocko

The Stitches

"8x12"

www.vinlydogrecords.com

This is a reissue of their 1995 release. Classic, snotty punk rock that that creeps into you like a staph infection. The singer sings so snotty in fact that he sounds more like a girl here than he does on later releases. I saw these guys play in Akron, Ohio a few years ago and it was one of the best punk rock shows I had seen in ages. This stuff is almost archetypal punk rock that is impossible not to like. A soundtrack to youthful fatalism venting itself in the most rousing way possible. Includes a cover of Shane McGowan's "That Woman's Got Me Drinking." Essential punk rock that will once again challenge your preconceived notions concerning the lameness of Southern California. -Ben

Stiv Bators

"L.A. Confidential"

www.bomp.com

You can't be into punk rock, be from NE Ohio, and not be excited to receive a solo CD by Stiv Bators of the Dead Boys in the mail. I have to admit, I had never heard his solo work before, and this CD was the perfect remedy. It collects singles from between 1980-87, along with demos and alternate versions. The style is more of a mod-influenced power pop. Ten years ago I may have popped this back out and cleansed my palette with the Dead Boys "Young, Loud, and Snotty," but now I find myself liking it a lot. It starts off with a cover of, appropriately enough, with a tune by Cleveland's own British Invasion-inspired band from the 60's, The Choir. "It's Cold Outside" is an undeniably great song. There are also covers of "Story In Your Eyes" by the Moody Blues, "Have Love Will Travel" by Richard Berry & The Pharaohs, and a rehearsal tape version of "Neat Neat Neat" by the Damned featuring Brian James. There is also a cover of "Louie, Louie" done here as a drunken jam session with The Runaways and Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69. There are also plenty of great originals penned by Stiv, showing him to be as skilled at writing garage and pop songs as he was with raucous punk rock. - Ben

The Stivs

"Sweet Heartache and the Satisfaction"

www.Boottohead.com

Fourteen cuts of pure punkrocknroll from Portland. That term gets thrown around a lot, but this band and album truly earns that description. Straight up no frills rock and roll with influences proudly worn on their sleeves, cranked out without aping their heroes. The reckless sounds of New York and Detroit 70's era punk (and the more-gritty-less-pretty side of glam) are obvious, but The Stivs drive home their sound with influences from later rawk as well. The record starts with the call to "hear my commandments of rock/live by my commandments of rock" as we hear the build up of what implies a stomping arena calling the Stivs to action. In a better world, The Stivs WOULD be playing to massive arenas, and filling the airwaves as well with swaggering anthems like "The Satisfaction" or "Gimme Love." This band pulls off more great riffs and crunch in one song than most bands who currently fill arenas do on an entire record, and singer Rockwell's delivery screams of desire, a hint of desperation, and take no prisoners drive. Produced by big name maestro Jack Endino (who wisely did not over-produce and keeps the edge intact), this is one of those albums that makes you realize this band must rock totally unhinged live. One of my favorite moments is when they actually slow things down (slightly) for the moody "Sweet Heartache (12 Months)." But then The Stivs hit full speed and dish out beautiful bruises on "We Are the Pack" and never let up for the last few cuts. - Rocko

Straitjacket

"Modern Thieves"

www.tkorecords.com

Floating pop melodies and snotty vocals atop a restless sea of bouncy guitars, Portland's Straitjacket may have a modern production, but their music is firmly entrenched in the UK '77 school of punk rock. Jacking into the electricity of past great such as The Clash, Stiff Little Fingers, and The Buzzcocks, they come to life with a familiar energy of their own. Well done. - Ben

Street Brats

"See You at the Bottom..."

www.fullbreach.com

Having seen these guys and liked them, I'm not real crazy with the direction they've taken with this album. I can't help but think they're waiting for something to break and make them more accessible to the mainstream. Is that wrong? I'm not in their band and can't say definitively, but I can say that this wouldn't have me shilling out cover price for this album, that's for damn sure. Comes off as tough, but in a non-threatening sorta way. An album looking for a niche, to be sure. - Joe Pacak

Strychnine

"Born in a Bar"

www.tkorecords.com

These guys play fast hardcore punk with some metal woven into the tapestry of discontent. While most hardcore with metal tends to trade off urgency for an uneventful drudging heaviness, these guys thankfully play fast most of the time. It's roughneck thrashcore with guttural Oi-type vocals that I don't care for too much. Interestingly, they do a cover of their Sonics' namesake, and oddly it has less punch than the original. For me, this disc is just pleasant background music for tattoo shops. - Ben

Surfin' Criminals

"Brenta Surf'N'Roll Music"

www.surfincriminals.com

This Italian instrumental surf band has a pretty classic sound and a festive delivery that is hard to

resist, except maybe when covering two of the most famous and predictable instro tunes: Miserlou and Rumble. Their Miserlou sounds a bit sloppy as he goes for something close to the original and hits troubled waters. There are some other more obscure covers as well, and 4 originals. Even though there's not a ton of originality here, it is a nice listen. - Ben

The Suicide Drivers

"There's till Plenty of Room in my Car"

Drivers@luuku.com

I couldn't find any info about this band anywhere. I think they may be from Finland. This disc has three songs. The first is terrible: slow and boring greaser rock with cheesy guitars and bad vocals. The next one is just a little better, and the third one isn't too great either. I am not a fan. Pretty Awful. - Ben

Szymanski Shettler Morris

Self-titled CD

www.alivenergy.com

Three guys (drums, guitars, & keyboards) playing what some might call Avant-rock. It hits me as a pop-based garage meets analog electronica with some interesting moments nestled inside a commercial version of garage music. His singing reminds me of Anthony Keidas and Bono at times. Kinda like the Gorillaz too. It kills me with the amount of familiar things that I can't just seem to put my finger on. I imagine this would give a reviewer at Rolling Stone a boner. Me, I'm only at half-mast. It is quite good, but seems too clean and controlled. In a weird way, its carefully measured flawlessness has left it lifelessly average. - Ben

Those Poor Bastards

"Songs of Desperation"

www.gravewaxrecords.com

Next time you're drinking alone, trying suffocate that aching emptiness inside, you may want to pop in Those Poor Bastards to accompany your misery. They play Gothic Country that conjures dustbowl images of a landscape rife with spiritual poverty and crossroad devils. The result comes across as a less hopeful Louvin Brothers after too many Nick Cave albums. It slowly drips with the heat of the Deep South, carrying with it the eerie sound of souls leaving bodies. All of the murder, longing, and anguish contained in these songs is nicely tempered with a subtle black humor, and I like it. - Ben

Three Blue Teardrops

"Rustbelt Trio"

www.threeblueteardrops.com

The first song on this disc made me want to rip my ears off with the chorus... a poor choice as the opening track. Fortunately, the second tune has a darker rockabilly vibe that I like much better. This is the first album since 1997 for a Chicago group who have actually been around since 1991, although I've never heard any of their previous output. I give them points for taking the time to pen all 13 of these tracks in a genre where most bands are content to go the tiresome rockabilly jukebox route. These guys are good musicians who aren't trying to carbon copy traditional rockabilly, but rather use it as a base of operations. While the results can be pretty good, they can often be a little lackluster as well. Then again, I've been subjected to way more rockabilly bands than the average person should be, so it takes a little more to get me there. The guitarist has a nice tone and plays very well, but a few of the tracks are a little sleepy, and some of the backing vocals made me wince. Still, a pretty respectable offering. - Ben

Throbbin Urges

Slef-titled CD

www.dead-beat-records.com

The first time I heard this I thought it was so lo-fi that it wasn't even listenable, but something kept me listening against my better judgement...three times

in a row. While the levels are clipping across the board, it still maintains an appeal and energy that you discern a little bit more each time through. Putting an album out like this in an age rife with studio overproduction and professional-sounding home computer recordings seems to be a direct "fuck you" to the homogeneity of the digital age. This is about as primitive and wild as a garage punk band could be. It sounds like it was recorded in the toxic sewers beneath a superfund site. Raw as my penis after spending an hour at grannybanger.com. -Ben

Throw Rag

"13 Ft. and Rising"

www.throwrag.com

This is the third album by Throw Rag and each one gets a bigger sound with better production. It kinda takes the sweat and filth out of the sound, which has in turn taken me some getting used to, as I am a fan of the more dirty, smelly sound these guys let off. But don't get me wrong, this CD still sounds good. Appearances are made by Jello Biafra and Keith Morris, and Lemmy shows up on the Merle Haggard song "Tonight the Bottle Let Me Down." They play a sleazy rock-n-roll which has been getting progressively less and less influenced by rockabilly and country, but is still pretty great as they veer more towards creepy punk rock. - Ben

The Tombstones

"Twang from the Grave"

www.saustextmedia.com

Back in the late 80's/early 90's the Tombstones were apparently a linchpin in the Atlanta roots punk underground scene. Now they have resurfaced in Austin, Texas, and re-issued an anthology of their old music. What's good about this is the fact that the roots rollover into punk rock wasn't yet so absolutely pervasive. They weren't working in a vacuum of course, but the genre clichés weren't yet so firmly entrenched, and this results in some fresh-sounding recordings that musically sometimes have a slight Gun Club feel. One of the songs here was actually recorded by the late Stiv Bators on "The Last Race." There is a dark, anguished feel to the Tombstones, but not in a phony, horror flick sort of way. More like some southern gothic roots shining through. I like this quite a bit. - Ben

Tommy and the Terrors

"Unleash the Fury"

www.tkorecords.com

The first song on this reminded me of the Templars a bit, then the second one reminded me a little of the Mau Maus. While I wouldn't draw a straight line from those bands to this one, it does seem like they are bridging Street Punk and Hardcore with more than a little Boston flavor in the mix. Definitely listenable and better than average. - Ben

Tommy Gutless

"Death, Honor, or Glory Bound!"

www.streetanthemrecords.com

Out of Pittsburgh, Tommy Gutless features Thom from Philadelphia Experiment and Aaron Brown on drums, who is better known for fronting the Rockabilly band, The Helldivers. Here they help provide melodic anthems of the Street Punk variety, spearheaded by Bryan McQuaid, who sings a lot like Mike McColgan on early Dropkick Murphys records. They also conjure up thoughts of the Ducky Boys, Brassknuckle Boys, the Bruisers, and the blue-collar politics of the Hudson Falcons. Whereas you come across a lot of Street Punk and Oi bands grunting out hollow lyrics between beers, Tommy Gutless comes off as more sincere and heartfelt, and that's something we can always use more of. - Ben

Tractor Sex Fatality

"Peel and Eat"

www.dead-beat-records.com

This is dark and intense noise rock that lashes at your lobes like a cybernetic slave master with a few screws loose. While I like the claustrophobic and unrelentingly aggressive sound, I do think the singer gets a bit too histrionic at times. Sounding like the Jesus Lizard yelping mad from electric shock. The production is like a jagged sore pulsing and oozing. It's a particularly demented album that grows on me with each listen, especially when I'm drunk. -Ben

The Trailerpark Tornados

"Mata Al Contacto"

www.bigneckrecords.com

Mixing lo-fi garage-punk with a predominant and aggressive Confederacy of Scum sound (despite being from Buffalo, NY), the Trailerpark Tornados reach new depths of sleazy and raw, but I'm just not feeling it. It's not bad. I wouldn't complain if somebody put them on the stereo, but it wouldn't be my first choice. - Ben

The Tremors

"Uranium Rock EP"

www.tremorsrockabilly.com

A nice little sample of six rockabilly tracks to give you a taste of this North Carolina three-piece. I think you will like what you taste. They aren't doing anything groundbreaking or earth shattering, but if what you like is solid, well-executed music by guys having fun then pick this up. The disc is supposed to glow in the dark...I am going to test it out tonight just to see how radioactive it really is! - Lisa

TubeStone

"Aligretosurfati"

www.tubestone.com

This is exceptional. In a genre where few bands suck, but few stand out, this Slovenian band is quite amazing. I listened to this at work on headphones and I just about melted into my chair. It is instrumental surf music that purports to be experimental, but don't let that tagline put you off. There are exotic melodies that don't sound trite and cliché, and the guitar tone is so pure it's like angels kissing your ears. It's lyrical without words. If you like your surf with nuance, atmosphere, and creativity, you'll want to check this out. - Ben

Turpentine Brothers

"We Don't Care About Your Good Times"

www.alive-totalenergy.com

This band contains members of Kings of Nuthin' and Mr. Airplane Man playing soulful garage rock. Perhaps the most amazing thing about this band is the dominant organ sound that manages not to sound overbearing or garish. Instead it weaves into the fabric of the songs, giving fullness and character to the band. There are a couple flat out rockers on this, with echoed vocals and masochistic guitars being beat into the Oblivians back catalog (albeit with much cleaner production), and there are also slower numbers that bring the Reigning Sound to mind. None of their influences are too overt for the most part, though, and I am liking this a lot. With each listen the experience gets a little bit richer. This is the kind of album you can really connect to wearing headphones while walking through town on a fall afternoon, or as you're driving alone late at night. There is an instrumental on here that is easily one of my top 5 instros of all time. - Ben

TV Set

"Regret Is For Humans"

www.tvsetnoise.com

A mixture of 80's Pop and dark New Wave, TV Set have apparently been doing this for nearly 20 years,

and are now a solo act. He's not a great singer, but vocals are pretty straightforward and honest. He kind of sounds like Fred from the B-52's at times. The music and lyrics are weird and funny in an oddball kind of way. I like the more upbeat songs best. It would be fun to dance to. I like it. - Lisa

TVH

"Night Raid On Lisbon Street"

www.flappingjet.com

TVH is the new band fronted by Johnny Strike from Crime and featuring Jimmy from Crucifix. They do one Crime song ("Hot Wire My Heart"), as well as covers of Sonic Youth and Robert Johnson. This is pretty rockin' stuff that churns along slowly with a coolness that isn't self-conscious or affected. It has a driving pulse pumping dirty blood through a broken body with nothing left to prove. The songs are slow, but will ensnare you with a plodding perfection. Like a soundtrack for the corner bar you hit after giving plasma, or driving home to your wife after a day at the track instead of work. Excellent music that I'll be returning to. - Ben

Union Avenue

"Teenage Kicks" CD EP

www.raucousrecords.com

Starting off with one of the weirdest, coolest covers I've ever heard, Union Avenue throws a leg out with the Undertones' "Teenage Kicks" mixed up with "Ring of Fire" and delivered much like Johnny Cash. The next track offers further temptation with the Cash-ification of "Sympathy For The Devil" by the Stones. Quite entertaining. The third and final song is "Feltham Prison Blues," which is a perversion of the obvious Cash song. A fun CD that shows the right way to do covers... strangely. - Ben

The Urgencies

"Desolation Chic"

www.bubblempirerecordings.com

Featuring members of Teen Cool, The Materialistics, and The Ends, The Urgencies wear their influences on their sleeve and capably play music in the vein of the New York Dolls, Plimsouls, D Generation, et al. Pretty strong mid-tempo glamrock/power pop, but for some reason it just isn't exciting me as much as it should. Maybe I need a few more listens under my belt. - Ben

Valient Thorr

"Total Universe Man"

www.valientthorr.com

Imagine the worst possible Al Sharpton impersonation to start things off before launching into a parody/homage to Iron Maiden metal and butt rock. The singer ranges from pretty normal to the voice that people do when they are making fun of metal. Seriously, he is obviously trying to be bad, and it works: it is so bad I couldn't listen to the entire disc. The guitar player is good, but then so were Eddie Van Halen and Yngwie Malmsteen, whom I wish were gay so they couldn't procreate and leave more of their ilk. The disc is funny for a very short period of time, then becomes just annoying. - Ben

Vincent Razorbacks

Self-titled CD

www.raucousrecords.com

I was expecting something more rockabilly, but this actually is cranked-up Southern rock'n'roll with some crunchy over-driven guitars and vocals that kind of remind me of Megadeth at times. Don't get me wrong, there are elements of rockabilly and blues, but they get drowned in a fifth of Wild Turkey then set on fire. I thought I wasn't gonna like this because so many bands go down this path and end up sucking ass, but these guys appear to be one of the exceptions. They've tweaked the sound just enough

to avoid being dixie-fried dog shit. I think it is the unexpected 80's metal riffs thrown in that does it for me. Go figure. This is a winner. - Ben

Volumen

"Science Faction"

www.volumen.net

I was having a hard time figuring out how to describe this Montana band, then I saw that their website mentioned them playing Nerd Rock. That actually fits pretty well. It's like they took various elements of Pop, Indie and Rock, tossed them into a cement mixer, then used them as a foundation to build their bunker of the bizarre. While I am not completely enthralled by their music, it does have some really good moments. My problem is that, though it experiments a bit and does some interesting things, often it gets too light and floats right out of consciousness. It's not trance-inducing, which I like, but rather the Indie Rock component didn't get mashed up enough in the mixer. I like it better when their barbed edges show through, but this doesn't happen enough for my tastes. - Ben

The Vultures

Self-Titled CD

www.bigmuddyrecords.com

This St. Louis rockabilly-surf party band sets loose a handful of originals along with entertaining covers of The Sonics' "Strychnine," Tommy James and the Shondells' "Hanky Panky," The Misfits' "Attitude," and "Let's Have A Party," written by Jessie Mae Robinson but popularized by Elvis and Wanda Jackson. There is trade-off between male and female vocals as well as some instrumentals. Something about this is so loose and fun that it's hard to resist. It'll be staying in my collection. - Ben

The Wages of Sin

"Custom of the Sea"

www.thewages.com

If you like salty sea air, accordion, mandolin, and fiddle, you will love this band. One listen and you are transported off to the lower deck of a pirate ship, stomping your foot, watching the wenches dance around, drinking rum and eating roast seagull with your bare hands. They have a lot of Celtic and bluegrass influence, and boast one of my favorite instruments: the musical saw! That makes them aces in my book. There are 12 original tracks plus 2 covers, all of which are excellent. -Lisa

The Washouts

"I Was A Teenage Washout!"

www.gollygeerecords.com

There are 30 songs on here by Rip Carson's old band from when he was friggin' 11 YEARS OLD. I know you are probably thinking it's cute that an 11 year-old had a band, and that this has to be a novelty release. The simple truth, though, is that this CD rocks! It makes me physically sick, it rocks so much. When I was 11, I was playing Asteroids on my Atari and making robots out of Legos. He, on the other hand, was playing outstanding garage punk that blows the crap out of most of the adults out there trying to grasp at this type of youthful energy. Life isn't fair. Whereas many young bands may have this level of energy and enthusiasm, they rarely if ever pair it with ripping guitar riffs of this caliber. To be honest, this disc actually covers the period from when he was 11-16 years old, and his vocals have a bizarre pre-pubescent, helium-filled quality as he tries his best to wail with punk rock abandon. It is actually an oddly cool sound once you get used to it. While there's a good amount of the Rockabilly style that Rip would later be known for, this also has a lot of dirty guitars pounding out glorious power chords. Most songs are originals with only a handful of covers by The Misfits, Sonics, and The Fall-outs. Very worth picking up. - Ben

Whiskey Daredevils

"Greatest Hits"

www.whiskeydaredevils.com

Made up from the remaining Cowslingers after Bobby Latina left the band, the Whiskey Daredevils have replaced him with two guitar players (Bob Lanphier and Dave Bowling), and a came out with a debut album of their "Greatest Hits." Perhaps my favorite thing about this band (and the Cowslingers) is their sarcastic sense of humor. Here they mock the phony hillbilly hipster look with their song "Ironie Trucker Hat" and "Jesus Walks Beside Me" is a barroom singalong about taking our Lord and Savior on a gambling trip to Sin City. There is also a bluesy cover of the Dead Kennedys "Let's Lynch the Landlord," and in general the music is an amped-up rootsy rock'n'roll located on the outskirts of cowpunk country. The best songs are the speedy, rough-shod numbers like "AMC Hornet," "Mickey's Bigmouth," and "Greasy Box." I may actually like this better than the Cowslingers. Good stuff that does something with the genre other than merely fleshing out a blueprint. - Ben

Wilma Strippers

4-song CDEP

www.myspace.com/wilmastrippers

Here is an Italian garage rock band with a somewhat unusual take on the genre. There are kind of post-punk vocals, light and dissonant guitar hooks, shimmering reverb delay, and an overall quirkiness. Pretty interesting. Would want to hear more. - Ben

Wilson Gil & the Willful Sinners

"American Banned"

www.tinnitusrecords.com

Some press materials that came with this cd describe it as "neo goth crooning" and "serial killer suave." I don't exactly hear that, but that is a good thing in this case. Because what I hear is a more visceral, gritty American roots rock rather than something quite so stylized and easily pigeonholed. There is definitely a dark undercurrent to the songs and the tales they weave... tales of "Drink," "Bad Reputation", and "My Town," but it's more of a twilight kind of dark - right around the time a day's work is done and a man needs to belly up to the bar. Musically they remind me a little of the late great Go To Blazes with a John Doe meets Richard Thompson singer. Wilson definitely knows how to write and deliver a witty lyric and set a mood with the band. Tales of struggle, want, defeat, and some sort of attempt at redemption are crafted expertly along with the Willful Sinners' hard-edged uniquely American roots rock crunch, shred, and twang. Every blue collar sonofabitch out there needs to "Get A Song" and Wilson gives you one to believe in. - Rocko

The X-Possibles

Self-Titled CD

www.x-possibles.com

I actually had a previous CD-R by this New York band with many of the same songs on it. Here they are professionally re-recorded and fuller, but I think I liked the CD-R a little better. While the old songs redone here are ironed-out a bit more, some weeded out, and great new ones added, the guitars now have a kind bland, chunky, studio-produced sound. That aside, this is mostly really good female-fronted punk rock with catchy and unique songs, lots of urgency and bite, and a varied delivery (from pop punk to mostly hardcore). Tibby-X has a great razored vocal articulation and growl that breaks free of the Distillers/Hole mold. She can also smooth it out a bit on the slower tracks, while retaining their essential raspiness. The songs are well arranged too. I think my only hesitation is the flat production, which doesn't ruin things, but can make a good band blend into the pack. - Ben

The Yellow Belts

Self-titled CD

www.theyellowbelts.com

From Lexington, Kentucky, comes this dose of dirty rock'n'roll slathered in barbecue sauce and sweaty riffs. It's the kind of big southern rock sound you'd expect from members of Nine Pound Hammer, with some classic snottiness and punkish verve tossed into the stew. I'd go see these guys for sure if they ever came through. This is just a little 6-song EP and that's probably for the best, as I don't think I could handle much more freakin' rock before my face falls off. Check these guys out for sure. - Lisa

Zombina and the Skeletones

"Mondo Zomnina" EP

www.zombina.com

Wheel!!! I am in LOVE with this band! Hailing from Liverpool, U.K. this is horror punk/surf/new wave/rock-n-roll at it's absolute best. Exceptionally original, fun, upbeat and skilled on all sorts on instruments, this band gets two thumbs way up in my opinion. Their influences are cited as the Ramones, Blondie, the Cramps, the B-52's, the Damned, Tom Waits, and the Groovie Ghoulies. You get 5 tracks here, and it's just not enough. I am sad they are from overseas and my chances of seeing them are little to none. Boo. A trip to England may just be what I need. I think "Counting On Your Suicide" may be the best song in the entire world. OMG, I just looked on their myspace page and they said they have a 2007 USA tour!!!! I am a geek. - Lisa

VARIOUS ARTISTS COMPILATIONS

The 666 Rarities LP

www.altercationrecords.com

Despite the title and no less than three Misfits covers, this isn't all horror-punk stuff (and it's on CD not LP). Sure, Blasé Debris is included and fits that description, but I have to admit I like their energetic contributions here more than their full-length CD. There are four bands on this disc, each donated four exclusive songs. Casket Architects sound a lot like the experimental noise punk of The Locust, with a prog. metal vibe and screamed throaty vocals. Dead Unicorn does a slow, down-tuned and sludgy hard rock that sometimes sounds like a record at the wrong RPM. Plastic Jesus plays pretty East Coast punk rock that doesn't necessarily sound like the Ducky Boys, Hudson Falcons or DKM, but fits in with that scene. Especially with a cover of a 1930's workers' rights anthem, "Joe Hill." - Ben

Anti-Disco League vol. 1

www.templecombrecords.com

Here we have a nice little compilation of Oi music that reminds me why I liked this type of music in the first place. I'm so sick of these bands doing the same tired, worn out "boots and braces, we are patriots, oi oi!" thing that it is refreshing to hear a CD full of bands that aren't tracking up that same area of carpet. Upbeat with hooks that never get in the way of the impact, for the most part this compilation rarely misses in its offerings of well-crafted music that remains aggressive without being ham-fisted and simple-minded. Some of the best tracks are by the Templars, Crashed Out, and No Man's Land. There are 16 songs total for you to enjoy. - Lisa

Backstreets Of American Oi!

Volume 2: Ten Years Later

www.streetanthemrecords.com

The second instalment to *Backstreets of American Oi*, this 2 CD set announces "... American Oi and

Streetpunk" drawing for once and for all a line between these much intermingled genres. Just find that line first and then let me know where the fuck it is and we'll all be good. I'm counting about 53 bands on this mother, 2 disc's baybee, oh yeah. I liked disc 2 better overall, but having said that I'd say about 75% of the bands on here are pretty damn good, with some real standout material. This also features the worst song I have ever fucking heard. Ever. Period. Whose good on this? Who is the worst band ever? Being as this is well worth the cover price, buy it and come to your own conclusions. After all I'm not exactly Gene Siskel re-incarnate, motherfuckers. - Joe Pacak

Brabantia Nostra: Oi / Streetpunk

www.rebellionrecords.nl

This CD reminds me of a beer sampler from Holland. Some songs are smooth and go down easy, others make you run for the shitter. All of these bands are from south Holland, and all of them definitely fit into the Oi/Streetpunk mold. Some have a very distinctive sound, while others' influences are obvious. As you could imagine, there are some heavy Dropkick Murphys influences, 4 Skins, Blitz, Motorhead - all the giants of the genre. A couple of the bands manage to stand out amongst the beer soaked Fred Perry wearin' throng, which isn't easy. Song lyrics are about the usual stresses of a Dutch skin's life: fighting, drinking beer, watching football matches, drinking some more beer, some more fighting, backing up your friends in a fight.....Overall I would say this CD is very good, and delivers exactly what is promised. The perfect loud compliment to a case of Oranjboom. - Jeff Lamm

Broken Bonez Records Comp

www.brokenbonezrecords.com

I don't have any information on this record label or have any idea who any of the bands are on this 14-track disc. The CD serves a mix of hardcore, Ska, Rockabilly, Spaghetti Western and D is pretty enjoyable. The record label website doesn't work and if they sent a promo kit along with the disc, I can't find it anywhere. From what I can find on the internet the label is from El Paso, TX. -Lisa

The Funhouse Comp Thing

www.thefunhousesattle.com

This is a compilation of bands that have played at what must be a great Seattle punk rock club, and it is packed solid with great bands - 32 of them issuing mostly previously unreleased songs. The only band on here who hasn't played at the Funhouse is the Freak Outs, because they are 15 and their parents won't let them play in a bar. The music here is predominantly garage and sleazy trash punk... my kind of stuff. Some excellent bands included: Fe Fi Fo Fums, Primate 5, Trashies, Black Horse, Pulses, Freak Outs, Mexican Blackbirds, Charming Snakes, Cripples, Invisible Eyes, Ape City R&B, Steaming Wold Penis, and the Earaches. This is one of the better comps I've ever heard in a while, & one that fans of garage-punk will want to grab up. - Ben

Get Outta Philly: Rock'n'Roll from the City of Brotherly Love

www.tickticktickrecords.com

Before I got this comp I had never heard any of these bands, so I was expecting something pretty terrible. How many good unknown bands can one city host? Apparently, Philly hosts a ton. This is a great compilation of garage and punk bands, ranging from rootsy sounds, to Oldies pop, to 60's psychedelic weirdness, to near hardcore, and more. Standouts by The Minks, Toothless George & His One Man Band, Jukebox Zeros, Bad Penny, The Chance, and the The Blow Goes. A surprisingly solid CD. - Ben

Godfathers of LA Punk

www.siamedogsrecords.com

This CD is the product of a French photographer who went to the U.S. in the 70's and ended up becoming friends with the Stooges. In fact, the Stooges start this disc off with a couple versions of "I Got A Right" and "Gimme Some Skin." "Rock Action" is also added as a bonus track at the end of the CD. Elsewhere on the disc are tracks by the sax-infused proto-glam rockers the Max Lazer Band, the stupid misogyny of "Beat Her With a Rake" by The Weasels, the classic punk rock and Rip Offs precursor The Controllers, and the bizarre experimentalism of Nu Americans and The Attitude (who have Little Richard playing keyboards on a cover of "Hounddog"). A lot of this exceptionally good, while some of it strikes some pretty low ground. If you don't have "I Got A Right" on anything else, and you don't own any Controllers (shame!), I'd recommend picking this up. You'll likely find something else to like on this also. -Ben

Graveyard Hop:

The Darkside of Rock'N'Roll

www.8xdrauf.de

As with most compilations you get a little bit of good, a little bit of bad and a lot of mediocre. This disc is no exception. There are some stand out artists like Kathy X, The Tasmanian Devils, and The Tony Montanas. I guess I should mention that this is a European Psychobilly compilation more geared towards the metal/goth aspects of psycho. Not a bad comp if you are looking for some new bands to check out in the psycho scene from overseas. -Lisa

International Underground Tribute To The Man In Black

www.rebellion-records.com

After Johnny Cash passed away there have been numerous CD comps released in his memory. I enjoy reviewing them because I like seeing how other artists interpret and make the songs their own. This compilation is even cooler because it's an international collection. There are 29 tracks that cover all the great hits of Cash, plus songs not originally done the man in black, such as "Hurt." Bands included on this disc are Emscherkurve 77, Banner of Thugs, Riot Company, Social Combat and more bands along the same street rock/punk vein. Not a bad listen. - Lisa

Oi! Made In Holland

www.rebellionrecords.com.nl

Not so much on the streetpunk tip here, mostly the classic mid '80's type of Oi that had kids from pole to pole beating the fuck out of any and everyone not down with wife beaters and a #1 crop. A nice throwback to the way Oi was when it first started rearing its ugly clipper-scarred head on the international stage. This has the sound of the later Link comps: hard, a little punky, with at least a band or so who were cobbled together solely for their appearance on whichever comp needed the filler at the time. Still better than what we're making in the states these days. Pretty solid. - Joe Pacak

Pledge Your Allegiance... To Satan

www.necro-tonerecords.com

Things start off with a great track by Zombina & The Skeletons, followed by some fuzzed-out instrumentality by the Ghastly Ones. Then comes the horror-themed garage rock of the Demon Seeds and the Young Werewolves. Other highlights include the Butchers hacking out a great trashy rocker, Crimson Ghosts doing a surf version of the Misfits "Astro Zombies," the punchy junk rock of Spider Cider, the all-girl surf punk of Ghouls Night Out, the weird zombie rock from the Eerie Von, and the trademark horror-surf of Gein & The Graverobbers. Lots of chewy goodness inside this bit of ear candy. -Ben

7" RECORDS

The Answer Lies/ Ten Seconds to Liftoff

Split 7"

www.dirtculture.com

I saw The Answer Lies in Las Cruces back in June. I was absolutely parched, which caused me to drink too much El Presidente brandy and black out, lose dignity and coordination, then finally pass out. It wasn't my finest hour, and I think one of these guys was responsible for the sharpie penis on my forehead, which I discovered the next morning in the mirror of a rest stop bathroom in Texas. As I stared at the cartoon cock scribbled on the throbbing veins of my aching head, I was forced to take stock of my life and seek a way out of the spiritual cul-de-sac that I've journeyed down for 31 years. This magic marker member was a blessing in disguise, and since that day I've found solace in a lifestyle of temperance and quiet contemplation as a member of the modern Mormon Church. But I digress. The Answer Lies throw down a 3-song blast of hardcore punk rife with tension and rancor. Good stuff. I was much less impressed by ten Seconds to Liftoff. Their first cut is a really long, bad rock song about listening to rock songs. Their second song carries on the same theme, this time about playing the rock songs, and it's a little better, but I'm still not asking for (Ten) seconds. - Ben

The Blowtops

"Mad Monk Medication"

www.bigneckrecords.com

I've seen these guys twice and didn't care for them, but oddly enough, I really like their recordings, and this one is no exception. It's dark, schizo-frantic garage punk racket. The A-side is intense and convulsive, while side B is brooding and explosive in a great way I've not really heard before. High, high marks for this one. Get it. - Ben

The Dirty Fingers

"Name of the Game is...Cocaine!!"

www.bigneckrecords.com

Fast, charged-up rock'n'roll played sleazy and (obviously) cocaine-fueled. Puts me in the mind of the Candy Snatchers. With songs like "Girl to Fuck" and "She's a Slut," they obviously aren't pandering to the female crowd. - Ben

Divebomb Honey

"Get Up"

<http://myspace.com/jiltedrecords>

This is a female-fronted, keyboard-driven New Wave band featuring an ex-member of Sweet J.A.P., whom I really liked. The songs are pretty catchy and her voice is good, but some key ingredient is missing for me... some sort of edge or endearing eccentricity. Not bad, though. - Ben

The Earaches

"Freedumb Fries"

www.steelcagerecords.com

The pissed-off political garage rock of the title cut is not something you come every everyday. Fans of the big Dubya might feel a little squirt of indignation in their tighty whites once they see the cover art depicting a bare-assed president squatting on the globe and pinching out A-bombs while "Dick" Cheney hold the toilet paper with "U.S. Constitution" and "Kyoto" written on it. Anyway, this is the first I've heard the band and their music is pretty good. Side B is the virtually instrumental "Too Hot To Taste," which is just fuzzed-out fun. - Ben

First Offense

"Stranded in the Combat Zone"

www.myspace.com/firstoffense

These guys have come a long way since they were spikey-haired kids that I used to see at the Mantis in Kent, Ohio. When they sing lines like "you won't find hope beneath the neon lights," it is clear that they've moved beyond the stereotypical teenage punk sloganeering. Their sound has evolved and matured into a decent Street Punk/Oi band accurately described on the back of the jacket as being spiritually akin to The Bruisers, Hudson Falcons, and Ducky Boys. Here they show that they can go toe-to-steel-capped-toe with many of their upstart peers, and maybe a step or two beyond many of them.

- Ben

Functional Blackouts

3-song 7"

www.wrench.org

I put this record on and was knocked on my ass. These guys have one of the scariest, insane punk rock sounds going. Live, I thought they were the soundtrack to a multiple stabbing, and this comes close to capturing that feel on the two cuts that make up Side A. Side B is one instrumental track that is good, sloppy, churning, dark, ominous noise-punk. Worth its weight in busted gold teeth. - Ben

The Jolly Jumpers

"Suki Suki"

Dull City Records, <http://home.online.no/~gt-john/>

These guys are from Finland and have apparently been around since 1980. They A-side is guitar-driven rock with a lot of solos courtesy of an ex-Flaming Sideburns guitarist. It is good, but doesn't really demand my love. Side B is the more interesting cut, rolling out with a churning momentum reminiscent of the Stooges. This one I really like. - Ben

Knucklehead

"Cosmetic Youth"

www.longshotmusic.com

The Canucks play anthemic street punk with melody and some rock'n'roll panache that reminds me of Stiff Little Fingers and the GC's. There is some strong songwriting here with socio-political lyrics on the A-side, and some more introspective lyrics on the B-side. Both are done tastefully, and the music is top notch for this genre. - Ben

Los Raw Gospels

"El Fantasma"

Dull City Records, <http://home.online.no/~gt-john/>

Raw indeed! From London via a Norwegian label, one guy is from Finland, one is from Spain, and one of them is also in the band Black Time. This is extremely trashy, lo-fi garage with hint of rockabilly and blues punk. Fuck the limp, well-mannered shit - this is a thorough rogering of your prudish record collection. It'll leave you feeling dirty, but well-satisfied. - Ben

Memphis Morticians

"Greetings from the Memphis Mortuary"

www.memphismorticians.net

These Brooklynites may be lumped in with the Psychobilly crowd, but they also come across with a garage feel and the Psychobilly aspect is more in line with the early British stuff. This is a surprisingly good listen that will tread easily upon those with wary ears. - Ben

The Mutants

"Drunk Mambo Outtakes"

www.wantonrecords.net

I have a big stack of Mutants 7"s and they are among my favorite records to play. This one is a nice addition to the rotation. You get more of the Film Noir-sploitation soundtrack vibe with bongos, James Bond guitars, organs, Latin beats, saxophone, and even a flamenco breakdown. The perfect complement to a vodka tonic in your grandpa's

basement bar. My only complaint is that I don't like songs with women screaming in them, but what do you expect from "drunken outtakes?" - Ben

Not Psycho Enough!

Various Artists - Tribute to the Cosmic Psychos
Dull City Records, <http://home.online.no/~gt-john/>
There are four bands from different countries (Belgium, Norway, Luxemborg, and Germany) covering songs by the Cosmic Psychos, whom I've never heard before. However, these songs do stand on their own without prior knowledge being necessary. Most of it is energetic punk rock'n'roll by the Mormones, Bad Preachers, Superhelicopter LTD. The Sloggy cut is a weird, drug-addled deconstruction with female vocals. Not bad. - Ben

Teenage Crime Wave

Various Artists

www.squirrelrecords.co.uk

The four bands on here all play a sort of girl-group/pop/punk rock'n'roll. Bands are The Boonaraaaas, Elvis McMann, The Unlovables, and the Bazooka Boppers. Nothing here really scorched my eyebrows off. The cover is taken from the sexploitation film from 1976 entitled "Hustler Squad," depicting a large-breasted woman with a machine gun. Yes, my brain is crammed full of useless information. Hell, I even have a BA in English and Psychology. - Ben

Toys That Kill

"Don't Take My Clone"

www.dirtnaprecs.com

The title cut is awesome: a perfect example of the band at their best. It is catchy singalong punk, but sprinkled with a sort mysterious weirdness that makes it strangely trance-inducing and otherworldly. I actually wish it was a little longer, and I hate long songs. The B-side "Breaking Out" is more pop and less magically weird, but not bad. - Ben

Tractor Sex Fatality

"Live It Down"

www.bignecrecords.com

These guys have an extremely tense, noisy, and halting delivery to their songs that can border on annoying if you haven't sufficiently braced yourself first. It's a sort of musical abattoir where melody gets ground up and spit out. That's not always a bad thing, though, if you are in the mood for sonic abuse. - Ben

DVDS

Broad Daylight/ Shine On Sweet Starlet

Directed by JMM & Victoria Renard

www.guerrillamonster.com

Two delicious discs, both shot on Super 8, featuring rather enticing burlesque/go-go/striptease entertainment set to an amazing soundtrack. *Broad Daylight* is more of the Burlesque-A-Go-Go type shaking by dancers such as Kitten DeVille, Dirty Martini, Fat Bottom Revue, Mimi LeMeaux, and many more. *Shine On Sweet Starlet* is by far a more risqué film, with full nudity and decidedly naughty stripteases by performers such as Alicja Trout, Kelly Ball, and more. Music is provided by bands like The Royal Pendeltons, The Detroit Cobras, The Persuaders, Jack Oblivion, Demolition Doll Rods, and much more. Fun to put in while friends are over, use as marital aid, or watch while alone (that's what I'll do, heh heh). -Lisa

Rock & Roll Eulogy

Directed by Zach Clark (2004)

www.rockandrolleulogy.com

This is a 60's-style Teensploitation film featuring a great soundtrack including the 7 Shot Screamers, Psycho Charger, The Brimstones, The Straight 8s, Rocket 350, Speed Crazy, and Jimmy & The Teasers. It's like they recruited bands directly from the Heavy Rebel Weekender. The film itself is the classic tale of the new girl in town trying to fit in. New girl falls in with a gang of satanic outcast man-eaters who get her hooked on rock-n-roll, the addictive depraved soundtrack to delinquency. New girl sheds her shy and moral past for a lifestyle of criminal behavior and debauchery, which is symptomatic of the infectious jungle beat. From there comes the violence, blasphemy, switchblade catfights, interventions, brainwashing, and fun. It's a loving throwback to a time when rock-n-roll was seen as a scourge that would corrupt the white middle-class and rain destruction upon society. Like a lot of exploitation movies, it is framed as a cautionary tale for susceptible youth, while it revels and celebrates its supposed lurid subject matter. RnR Eulogy is a great B-movie flick with loads of charm. Required viewing by anyone who remembers that feeling of danger and excitement when they first got taken in by the devil's music. - Ben

BOOKS

Barney's Crew

By Sean Carswell

www.razorcake.com/gorskypress

This is a completely engaging book of short stories, and the third such collection by Sean Carswell issued forth by Gorsky Press. Sean's writing style is deceptively simple as he wrings a subtle brilliance and depth out of engrossing, easy-to-read stories penned with a light, conversational tone. His characters range from construction workers and hitchhiking college girls to working-class kids and expatriate fugitives. All are more than just tools of the author used to make a point or propel a narrative. Instead, they are given a depth and complexity that allows you to easily connect and empathize with them. I found myself so interested that I read this entire 237-page book in two days. The tales here explore such things as the comical and cathartic actions of a construction crew fed up with annoying car commercials on the radio, the tension and misunderstandings between a fine art photographer visiting his blue-collar family and going to hog dog field trials in rural Florida, lessons of life taught by neighborhood bullies, and a prophetic surfer foretelling ascension of magical sea turtles in Costa Rica. Carswell gleans insights and just as often invokes confusion, since life is never fits well within a logical paradigm. The stories here carry a lasting impact without succumbing to the temptation to be grandiose or trite. It is not the dense sort of writing that strikes elegant, quotable lines like Oscar Wilde, or that embodies a post-structuralist philosophy of language. Rather, Carswell employs the more accessible vernacular of the everyman to achieve a transcendent aesthetic with the overall story. He has finely honed his ability to do this, and makes it seem easy. The writing never gets in the way of the characters, and the reader comes away from the page feeling enriched and rewarded. - Ben

Xtra Tuf No. 5: The Strike Issue

by Moe Bowstern

Microcosm Publishing, www.microcosmpublishing.com

Xtra Tuf, written by Moe Bowstern, is a zine about commercial fishing, particularly Alaskan fishing, for which Bowstern has firsthand experience as a

deckhand over the last 15 years. Issue number 5, The Strike Issue, is a comprehensive journal, published by Microcosm Publishing, which takes a look at several strikes or "stand downs" in salmon and crab fishing by the fisherman in Kodiak, Alaska as well as surrounding communities. Fisherman are a loosely organized bunch, very independent by nature and necessity, and they are competing against increasing drops in fish prices caused by the highly organized Canneries (owned by big business in Japan, the US, Chile, and other world markets), farm-raised fish, big government and Mother Nature herself. The journal is divided into sections. Some are documentary looks at various strikes, particularly the Salmon Strike of 1997 and 2002 and the Tanner Crab Strike of 2005, and some are first person accounts of fisherman that took part in the strikes as union members or scabs. Fisher-Poems and songs are interspersed throughout. I liked this journal. Bowstern writes well and, while siding with the fisherman and their struggles to, ahem, stay afloat, doesn't flinch from taking an impartial look at the situation. It's informative to say the least. If you want to take a look into commercial fishing in Alaska, perhaps not a comprehensive one (though past and future issues of Xtra Tuf promise more), pick up a copy of Issue No. 5. These salty old salmon seaman are the real deal and Bowstern has more than enough experience on the decks and with the strikes to know her stuff. Highly recommended for vanguard warriors of the WTO sort. Fine letterpressing by Third Termite (thirdtermite@aol.com) and illustrations by the author, Mirabai Scholz, and various others provide a handsome package to the book and really help make the reading a pleasure for the eyes as well as the mind.

This book is FREE to Commercial Fishing Women as well as prisoners or can be purchased by those lucky or unlucky enough to be men, free, or non-fishing women at www.microcosmpublishing.com. Moe Bowstern can be reached by message in a bottle or at Xtra Tuf, PO Box 6834, Portland, OR 97228. - Bram Riddlebarger

On Subbing: The First Four Years

by Dave Roche

Microcosm Publishing, www.microcosmpublishing.com

This is another zine-culture-published-into-book-form offering from Microcosm Publishing. On Subbing contains segments, as well as an introduction, a few interludes, and an outro, from a zine that Dave Roche has been writing on his years of subbing in special education classes in and around Portland, Oregon. This was a hard book to get through. Not necessarily because the subject matter failed to elicit only a faint interest, but more from a barrage, page after page, of a combination of unclear, poorly edited writing on Mr. Roche's part and just an unacceptable number of typographic and punctuation errors on the part of the publisher and/or editor that constantly interrupted what little flow there was to the disjointed and diary-like paragraph length entries that make up the bulk of the text. The basic premise of On Subbing is that Dave is a punk/DIY/straightedge guy that moves from L.A. to Portland, has very little money and is looking for something larger in life. With no college degree, he looks to substitute teaching for a new challenge and way to inject some of his creed into the institutional system (he also has aspirations of someday becoming a high school math teacher) as well as a means of getting out of the service industry. However, without a teaching certificate, Dave is only qualified to sub in special education classes. The rest of the book details, in brief, small scenes of Dave's life as a sub in various schools and levels of special ed. classes. R. Crumb-like illustrations by various artists are interspersed through the book to highlight some of the events, some of which are funny, some tragic, and some banal.

Despite my many reservations about On Subbing, it does have an overall redeeming undercurrent. I kept reading even when I wanted to quit. Something kept me interested even when the story wasn't interesting and certainly wasn't building up to a glorious, literary climax. I think it's because, as Dave admits, he's just a regular guy going about his regular day, whether it be subbing for special education students, flipping hamburgers for the Man, or digging ditches for the hole it makes in the ground: it's the Everyman theme. And, sometimes, that's enough. - Bram Riddlebarger
You can contact Dave at P.O. Box 12142, Portland, OR 97212 or via email at poodrow@hotmail.com.

TOP FIVE MOST SICKENINGLY OVER-COVERED SONGS:

While these songs are all admittedly great, they have all been covered by so many bands over the years that I want to stab my genitals with a screwdriver dipped in rat feces whenever I hear them unimaginatively re-done for the millionth time. Even the occasional band that is otherwise good can sometimes fall victim to the call of the lame, and many have lost "cool" points as a result. As a public service, I thought I'd officially call for a moratorium on just the top 5 offenders. - Ben

1. "Folsom Prison Blues" - Johnny Cash

Please, please, please stop. He has so many other hapless songs that you could be butchering (but stay away from poor old "Cocaine Blues" as well). Folsom is such a standard song to cover that I actually went to a show once where I heard it by 4 different bands in the same night. Unless you are going to do the industrial-polka-metal version while dressed up as the Hamburglar, you should steer clear of this one like it was a sobriety checkpoint.

2. "Ace of Spades" - Motorhead

It doesn't matter if you are punk or rockabilly, it is still pretty weak to use this one to fill out your live set, let alone to bother recording it. It maybe even be sacrilegious to cover it, if you believe Lemmy really is God. Besides, you don't want to be one of those bands whose best song is a cover, do you?

3. "Twenty Flight Rock" - Eddie Cochran

According to government studies, it appears 74% of all Rockabilly bands have this one in their set. Many of these bands also see fit to record and release it... sounding exactly like the original. The original already exists, and it is better than yours. If you are going to do predominantly covers, maybe try to do one that isn't on the "Intro to Rockabilly" CD that comes with your first pair of cuffed jeans.

4. "The Crusher" - The Novas

The Cramps covered this and I think most bands are working from that version. Either way, I could fill up a couple compilations of bands doing this song just using records already in my collection. On the plus side, though, it is an invitation to wrestle, so when you see band #200,045 start into it, you can put the hammerlock on those turkeynecks and gouge out their eyes.

5. "England Belongs To Me" - Cocksparrer

It seems like every young punk band does this song (or "London's Burning" by the Clash), but cleverly replaces "England" with their city of origin. I once heard a band sing "Akron Belongs To Me." Now there's something to be proud of.

Rock N Roll Purgatory Quiz:

IS YOUR DREAM ALIEN COMING FOR YOU?



With only so many people each year being abducted by extraterrestrials, how can you tell if you might be next in line for some hot probing action? We've analyzed the data from past abductees over the last 50 years and statistically deduced the characteristics most desirable to our kinky overlords. Now you can know, once and for all, just how sexy you are to aliens.

1. My biggest fear is:

- A.) Getting rabies from the homeless
- B.) Being raped backstage by a tap-dancing hunchback after an off-Broadway production of *Cabaret*.
- C.) Visiting Cincinnati
- D.) Doing a book report naked in a room full of jeering sock puppets while the ghost of Gregory Hines slowly eats a bratwurst.

2. When I need to get in the mood I think of:

- A.) Sweaty men with bare buttocks suctioned to vinyl seat cushions.
- B.) Pulling splinters from the skin of woodworking nudists
- C.) The quivering meat flaps of transsexual plumbers.
- D.) Scott Baio riding a magic dolphin into my bedroom and tongue kissing its blowhole.

3. To impress a date I would:

- A.) Maintain a visible erection throughout the evening
- B.) Show him or her constellations formed by the track marks on my arms
- C.) Recite poems by Lord Byron while mesmerizing them with my mystic eyebrows.
- D.) Ritually eviscerate myself with the ceremonial sword of Yoshito so that my innards might add much needed flavor to the mud viper soufflé.

4. I am most happy when:

- A.) Cradled in my mother's bosom on a Friday night after I complete her weekly breast exam.
- B.) Trading crystal meth for macaroni necklaces and hand turkeys on preschool playgrounds.
- C.) Sketching naked pictures of the prophet Muhammad flying kites on Venice Beach.
- D.) Felching fainting goats then passionately kissing my mailman.

5. My Greatest hope is:

- A.) That I might be used as an incubator for a mighty Quāgon warrior's parasitic alien seed.
- B.) World hunger will be ended, ironically, by using the pickled meat of beauty pageant contestants.
- C.) That I might find true love with Ryan Seacrest.
- D.) To find my real parents among the arboreal pygmy chimps of Madagascar and to toss my orphan feces in their deserting faces.

6. The most erogenous area of an alien is:

- A.) The suction tendrils of their prehensile vulvas.
- B.) Their lactating sputum glands.
- C.) Area 56, located between the groinal snout and the threshing sphincter cusp.
- D.) The glazed membranes of the quiffing canal.

RESULTS

Mostly "A" Answers: It is unlikely that anyone on this planet or any other would have any desire to plunge their rigid meat flanks into your steamy mud pot. You could take a midnight tractor ride through a cornfield with a greased-up rump, wearing a T-shirt that says "Probe This, Alien Butt-Lovers!" and you would still remain an untapped rectal resource.

Mostly "B" Answers: You do run a high risk for cosmic copulation... only they will use *you* to probe *them*. You will hereafter be known as the "Galactic Gerbil"

Mostly "C" Answers: You will attract a Martian and Venutian couple "Seeking Third Party For Friendship, Maybe More." They will find you, but soon your bedroom hijinx causes marital friction, and after a major fight, you are forced to mediate a divorce settlement between the warring spouses. Custody issues for the 20,000-Andromedan battle dwarfs will prove to be complicated.

Mostly "D" Answers: You will be abducted for certain. It will happen on July 6, 2007 as you are peeing in the parking lot outside Hoggy's Roadhouse. You will be tenderly sodomized for 60 consecutive days by interplanetary leather boys. Dress casual and bring a covered dish.

Answers spread evenly: You won't be abducted. An alien bachelor will visit you, however. He will come to woo you with gifts of chocolate-covered reptoid larvae and a necklace made with amniotic clots mined from the dessicated womb of a Neptunian Cave Squid. He will give you a sensual rubdown with gelatinized plasma and sprinkle your quivering body with anaerobic bacteria. You will fall hopeless in love, but the affair will end badly when his outraged wife disfigures your face with bile from her radioactive vomit glands.

Answered in a dishonest manner: You will be molested by a gang of mutant space monkeys who will rub their radioactive feces into your eyeballs, disgorge half-digested chicken pot pies onto your shaved lap, and inject you with viscous venom their engorged uranium glands.



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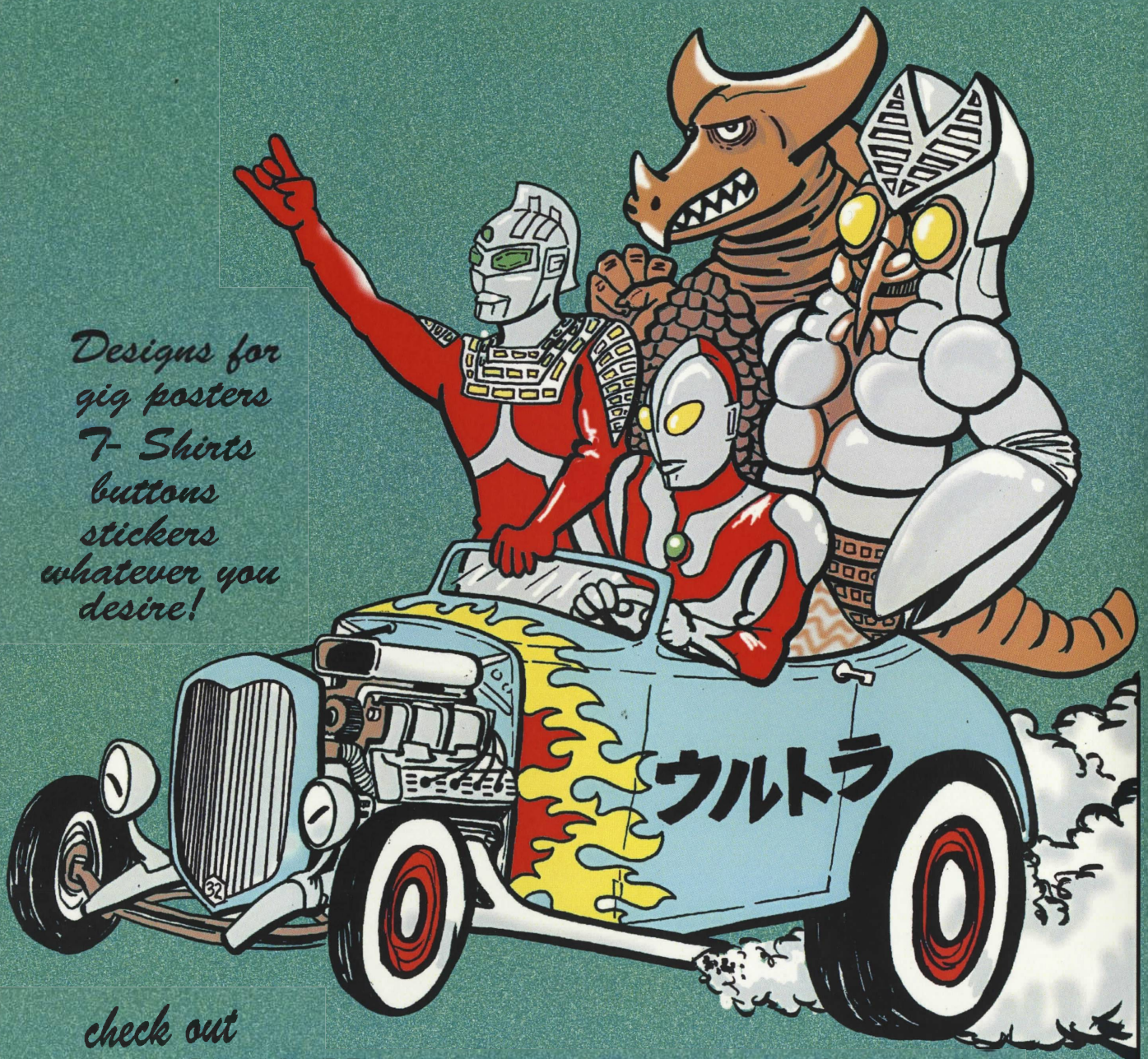
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