



Hard Times

50¢

VOL. I... No. 2

HARD TIMES, SEPTEMBER 84

Cheaper than a comic book!

BLACK FLAG

'We're into a wilder approach'

INTERVIEWS

NIHILISTICS, MINUTEMEN



Full Page Poster Inside

Concert & record reviews too!

CONTENTS

INTERVIEWS

- NIHILISTICS** "I'll respect anyone that forges their own sound. Even Van Halen forged their own sound, they didn't copy off of anybody."
pg 2 by Ron Gregorio
- BLACK FLAG** "What we do is on the records. It's for you to decide."
pg 8 by Krishna Jan
- MINUTEMEN** "Fuck, We can do that! We don't have to play in our rooms anymore."
pg 11 by Ron Gregorio

EVENTS

- SIOUXSIE and the BANSHEES** Beacon Theatre
pg 5 NYC, July 13'th
by Ken Messner
- BLACK FLAG, SISTERS OF MERCY** Pitz NYC, August 9'th
pg 6 by Joan McNally & Ron Gregorio
- SIX BANDS FOR SIX DOLLARS** Vatican Commandos,
Cuando Center, NYC Riistetyt, Ultra-
August 4'th Violence,
pg 15 Battalion of Saints,
Corrosion of Conformity,
Raw Power
by Les Welter
- CBGB MATINEE, JULY 1'st** Bloodclot, BGK,
pg 16 Cause for Alarm,
Reagan Youth
by Ron Gregorio
- REM, DREAM SYNDICATE** Beacon Theatre, NYC, July 22'nd
pg 17 by Mike Dillon

COLUMNS

- COMMENTARY** An Interview with a Vietnam War
pg 9 era draft evader.
by Ron Gregorio
- VINYL!** Record Reviews. Only the name has been
pg 13 changed.
by Rich Kearney & Mike Dillon
- LETTERS** Reader's Revenge
pg 1

Xenia's club review does not appear in this issue due to a sudden attack of irresponsibility. She WILL have a column for us next month.



Editor & Publisher
Ron Gregorio

Contributing Editor
Xenia Xyzpa

Administrative Executive
Mike Studzinski

Contributors
Mike Dillon
Dianne Dudasik
Rich Kearney
Ken Messner
Krishna Jan
Joan McNally
Les Welter

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Quote:

"What's the sense of being stupid if you can't act it sometimes."

On The Cover:

CAUSE FOR ALARM guitarist and his Guild Starfire at CBGB, July 1'st.

Monahan masters Loudon RR

LOUDON, NH, JULY 8
Results

(Yam): 3. Hana (Kaw)
(Yam): 5. Clint Webb (Kaw)
F/2 NOV: 1. Greg Chaisson (Yam); 4. Michael
quero (BMW); 3. Darryl Custer (Yam); 2. Derrick
Studzinski;
F/1 EXP: 1. Kevin Monahan (Kaw); 2. Derrick
Medagin (Suz); 3. Kenny Nause (Yam);
4. Doug Bogues (Yam);
5. Charles Giffes

Dear Ron & Hard Times

I picked up your Samhain issue at the Black Flag Ritz gig and I'm very impressed. I like the glossy format and the apparent care you guys took to put out such a neat looking mag. The Husker Du interview was welcome indeed! They've been one of my favorite bands for a while now and Grant is one funny guy. Most importantly, it appears that your mag will stay away from the infighting and stupid gossip that has killed other fanzines. The two articles on Nicaragua were quite informative. I've become more sympathetic to the FSLN's cause from reading your behind the scenes look. An article like that does more for my consciousness than Clash dogma. One note. In response to your query on what the U.S. excuse for screwing over Nicaragua before the founding of the U.S.S.R.--they might have been acting under the auspices of the Monroe Doctrine.

Sincerely,
Rich Zwerbach
Douglaston, N.Y.

Dear Hard Times,

I read the first ish of your fanzine and thought it was pretty interesting and thought provoking, something I can say for only a handful of fanzines. I was especially impressed by your political articles. I haven't read any other 'zine that has the guts to include politics with their interviews, aside from some sincere but in my opinion half-baked efforts by some of the bigger zines like Max R'n'R, much less thoughtful and informative pieces like the one in your 'zine. It was great to read a first hand account of what things are like in Nicaragua. So much of what I read about Central America is written from an outsiders point of view and comes off to me as preachy and misinformed, although I'm sure the writers mean well. The analysis of Nicaragua's upcoming election was very perceptive. It's interesting that stories like the ones about the CIA's "drug dealing" propaganda program and their possible assassination plans bear out many of the predictions in that article. The only negative comment I might have about the 'zine is that some of the interviews got to be a bit too unstructured and ponderous for my tastes, but still, there was more interesting stuff in them than in 90% of the interviews I read, and one thing that I thought was great was that the interviewer often expressed opinions that the bands didn't didn't share. I hate wimpy

interviewers that just go along with whatever shit the bands happen to spew, because bands do spew a lot of shit sometimes.

I think that hardcore should expand to embrace their types of expression besides music. Music is a quick and easy way to get a point across, but at the same time it can get boring and repetitious after a while. I'm glad to see that fanzines have developed as a way for people to express their ideas and creativity by writing as well as singing. I'm a tremendous music fan myself, but even I can only take so much of even the most interesting types of music.

I think there are a lot of interesting avenues of expression that have yet to be explored, and I've been working on a few that I think have been neglected. I've written a play and am working on a second, and I also enjoy writing fiction. Although the things that I write that are fictional aren't "Punk" in the sense that they have all the characters be punks or something, I think that they are punk in the sense that they encourage people to think for themselves as well as keeping their eyes open to what's going on in the rest of the world. I also design plays that can be put on pretty cheaply and easily, and they usually include music in some form.

Poetry is another a art form that I think can be an even more powerful medium of expression than just hardcore music, and anyone can do it, I've proven that.

I'll dig out some fiction that I've been working on recently and maybe some poetry and send it along to you as soon as I get back to Chicago. In the meantime, good luck.

Russel Forster
Elmhurst, IL
Rich and Russel

I'm glad you liked the Nicaragua pieces. I've taken lots of flak for including political articles in Hard Times, but one of the reasons I became turned onto punk/hardcore was because of the political/social sentiments, and I think that this is integral to the music, although it's not my main criteria in assessing music.

Attn: Ron & Crew at Hard Times,

I picked up your magazine at Fatboy's (Bleeker BLOBS) and can honestly say that I think you're doing a good job. A "fanzine" that doesn't hit you in the face with "unite the scenes" or "fuck the system" is always welcome

in my book. I don't go to may "hard-core" shows, because I don't like the people. I don't buy many new records because I don't have any money. All I do is write all day, but none of it sees the light of day. (Oh God! An unwanted rhyme!)

I put out a magazine called BURN (2nd issue out September 3rd). BURN doesn't interview bands or review records. What we do is print our own literature (poetry) and artwork and do the best we can to offend people that we don't like. It gives us something to do.

Enclosed are some poems/lyrics that I have written over the years. Enjoy them if you feel you really want to.

Take care,
Paul Poplawski
(a.k.a. Paul Bearser)
Staten Island, N.Y.

Paul,

Thanks for the poetry, we'll try to print some of it when we can afford more pages. We especially liked the photo.



AN UGLY JOG-THAT-IVE
NEVER SEEN BEFORE IN MY
LIFE (the same goes for the word)
TAKING A BATH.

All correspondence is welcome. Please include your address & phone number for verification purposes and send it along to

Hard Times

PO BOX 824
Maywood, N.J. 07067

NIHILISTICS

"YOU CAN'T MAKE IT LIKE
PROCESSED CHEESE SO THAT
EVERYONE CAN EAT IT"

by Ron Gregorio



MIKE

What could be more frightening on Friday the 13th than to drive out to the far reaches of N.Y. to see a show at a club that no one else showed up to? (Perform at the show!)

Rumor has it that there's a boycott against the Showplace in Dover, N.J., and accordingly there were maybe 100 people in attendance. But this absence of an audience didn't seem to bother the Nihilistics in the least. In fact, they were tighter than I'd ever seen them. Maybe the fact that they had a video crew taping them gave them the extra motivation. Vocalists Ron, guitarists Chris and drummer Troy were up to their usual level of performance. The difference was that bassist Mike, who usually gets drunk and makes more than his share of mistakes was sober and played extraordinarily well.

The band did an even mix of new and old songs, with the "audience" responding mostly to old "favorites" from the U.P., such as "Combat Stance," and "My Creed." The only problem came when someone kept spraying beer on Chris' guitar. Chris eventually got so pissed off that he ripped off his guitar, jumped off stage, and attacked the guy. My only complaint has nothing to do with the Nihilistics, but with the kid who stayed onstage

for what seemed like 1/2 the show, jumping up and down with his fist in the air. Some of these people have two beers, see the spotlight and lose it. Their big moment of glory.

I didn't pay to see you, pal. If you need attention, get a psychologist. Enough of this already. Insanity Defense opened the show for the Nihilistics, but couldn't seem to contend with the situation (no crowd). Unfortunately, they left before we could talk with them.

Q: You looked unusually sober tonight. The last time I saw you guys at the Rock Hotel you were pretty wrecked.

Mike: Sobriety. Straight. It doesn't matter. Whatever the mood is. I'm not saying that I make a steady diet of alcohol but it helps. I live the life of an old man.

Q: How's that?

Mike: An old fucking alcoholic on the fucking skids. Go to work, come home, have a cigar and a few beers, like Archie Bunker.

Q: Do you all work? The reason I'm asking is that I'd imagine there's no chance of a tour if you're tied to your jobs.

Ron: Touring's a waste of time.

Q: Why do you say that? There's a lot of people who'd like to see you.

Mike: So I hear.

Ron: Buy the video, it's as simple as that.

Mike: We can't get anything together because we're too lazy.

Ron: You know what it is? It boils down to this: we're working class guys. We work jobs. Not this shit where money and daddy buy the equipment and say, "Go have a good time, Junior."

Chris: We've got bills to pay, a little responsible to handle. Like it or not there's certain things you have to face.

Q: You don't think you could tour and make a little money from it?

Ron: We will when the time is right. The only thing that's been holding us back from touring is ourselves, that's all.

Mike: If you were to throw us all in a van I don't know how it would go because we've all got nasty personal habits.

Ron: Big things are on the horizon. When the time is right, we'll be ready.

Chris: Before we toured, we'd have to put out another album. You'll know that if another record comes out, then a tour will be following.

Q: Do you have anything in the works?

Ron: We're going major label, you know, but we can't say anything.

Mike: It's time for a little gratuity. A little pay back for all the suffering.

Q: Have you ever toured at all before?

Ron: No.

Mike: I've never been out of the tri-state area.

Q: And you were still able to land a record contract with only local exposure?

Mike: You sell records, you get the contract.

Ron: Hey, we sold over 50,000 albums, mostly export—Europe, Japan.

Q: How many did you sell in the N.Y.C. area?

Mike: I'd say about 15,000, that's all.

Ron: Germany, Britain are big; Italy, Holland, Belgium, even Japan. We even got letters from Poland with words cut out.

Mike: They can relate to our music because they've had a whole life of oppression.

It's great to pretend to be different, pretend to be rebellious when you don't have to be. Same thing like pretending to have no money when you do. It's another thing to be down on your ass and you're facing decisions that are going to alter the rest of your life. "Do I give in to society? Do I give in to this set of rules or do I say 'fuck you,' and use my head and be reasonable about it and say 'I'm a human being, I have a right to live how I want to live. I have a right to do what I want to do,' and you're faced with all these things crushing down on you and you're still fighting. Chris: I feel that we're really doing something—that we're accomplishing something.

Mike: Fuck that shit! I ain't a kid. I go out and bust my ass 50 hours a week. I earn a living and I pay my bills. I work like every other yob in this world. But in my time, I also want to blow off a little steam, while I have the chance.

Chris: There's a definite difference between bands where the kids are all young and going to school and bands where the musicians are working class people. We can't get in as much practice as we'd like because everybody works. There's a lot of things we can't do. These kids, they have all summer off and they sit around and play in Mom and Dad's garage and don't have to worry about anything else.

Mike: Our equipment was never the best. The amps and stuff we have, it's s.k. stuff, but then I see seventeen year old kids waltzing in with all sorts of equipment. I don't know where the hell they get the money for that crap from. They complain about the system but it's the same system that gave them all that. I can't deal with the fucking hypocrisy. When I blow a speaker it's like a major catastrophe

because I have to scrape up the money to repair or replace it. I'm not seventeen years-old, 'Yeah, gee, Ron, can I have a new amp because I like to do this and it's like therapy: it's fun.' I have nothing to fall back on.

Chris: For example, this guy that kept shaking beer on my guitar. Now he thought he was having a good time, but he doesn't realize that I paid for the thing myself. I sweated for it and paid for it and he thinks he's just going to do whatever the hell he wants tonight and then tomorrow he'll be a different person, but tomorrow my guitar will still be ruined from him spraying beer all over it.

Q: How about people dancing on stage, like that obnoxious kid tonight?

Ron: It seems a little out of date down the line, you know? I don't mind it as long as they don't come in contact with anything that we have to pay for.

Q: It seems like you especially stimulate it for some reason. People are always trying to drag you offstage or pile on top of you. Every one of your shows that I've seen was like that.

Ron: Maybe I've just got that kind of a face.

Q: Do you mind it, or would you rather not have anything to do with it.

Ron: Whatever happens, happens. Expect the unexpected.

Chris: As long as it's spontaneous and not something you come out and plan to do.

Mike: Like you plan to jump off the stage or you plan to roll on the ground. That's why when we go up there, we usually don't even have a song list. We go up there and if it's cool, we just keep playing. If not, we just pack it in, that's all. That's how we feel. A lot of people tell us that's a fucked up attitude, we're not giving people this or that; we're selfish.

Chris: We're the only band that plays hour and a half sets. Tonight was only 45 minutes, but we just came off a show last night. We got no sleep.

Ron: You've got to have a little fun while you're at it.

Mike: It's hard to talk about fun with the nihilistics because our kind of fun may not be someone else's fun. It's hard to put a finger on what's enjoyable and what isn't. We might get a kick out of something that other people might not like. For instance, tonight nobody showed up. But we got a kick out of it in a perverse sort of way.

Chris: The only reason we stopped was that I broke a string and I didn't feel like stopping--putting a new one on and tun-

RON: "You've got to have a little fun while you're at it."



ing up while people stood around with nothing to do.

That, and the fact that they've been rushing the hell out of us ever since we got here. The sound man was 'boom, boom--do this, do that,' all night long. Even when we were up on stage he was hassling us. We got the feeling that they wanted to shove us off. As soon as we finished, they were saying, 'Everybody leave, it's time to go home.' What are you going to do? Real friendly atmosphere.

Mike: Hey, not much longer, pal. Very shortly we'll be able to call the shots ourselves. More than any other band or the Dead Kennedys ever did.

Chris: I've had it with getting into a place and right away they boss, boss and boss.

Mike: I don't have to put up with that shit anymore--fuck them. If they don't want us to play here, there's plenty of other places that will book us. I don't have to rely on these cunts for a show.

Chris: You know why they threw everyone out of here? I'll tell you why. They're all frustrated musicians and as soon as we're gone they'll get their instruments, jump on the stage and play all night.

Camera woman: Excuse me, can I say something? I got a shot of you (Mike) with the cigarette hanging out of your mouth that would make Dick Tracy drool.

Q: Yeah, he's real photogenic. I could have shot a whole roll of film just on him.

Chris: A load of what?

Mike: When I go home, I'm going to

shoot something in my bondage books.

Q: So, what sexual preferences do you have?

Ron: Feet.

Chris: Anything with a hole. Anything that will stay still long enough.

Ron: I used to work in a morgue.

Mike (to Ron): Aren't you a card carrying member of NAMBLA?

Q: I heard you guys had something to do with the devil worship cult in Long Island that killed the guy last week.

Ron: You did? What did you hear?

Q: Nothing, I'm only joking.

Mike: It's true, we knew those guys, but I don't think it was us that drove them over the edge.

Q: I heard that heavy metal drove them to it.

Chris: It would have been great if they found nihilistics spray-painted on the schoolyard wall.

Mike: Or if they carved nihilistics in the guy's belly. They gouged his eyes out, they might as well have carved up his belly, too. We could use the publicity. Whenever I read about someone committing suicide, I hope that they'd screw our name on the walls in blood.

Chris: Or the cops come in and find one of our records spinning on the turntable.

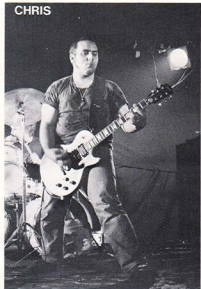
Q: You could arrange something like that. Have someone rob a bank and paint nihilistics on it inside the vault.

Chris: Where are you from?

Q: Connecticut--no, I mean Wyoming.

Mike: It's better if it's a mass murderer, or maybe shoot the President.

CHRIS



Q: That would be worthwhile in itself.

Ron: There's also people saying that the economy's on the rebound, but we don't want to talk about Reagan. He's got a nice haircut.

Chris: There's too much been said about him—what else can you say? Everyone knows what a jerk he is.

Q: But he'll still get re-elected. Chris: Couldn't really care who was in power. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Whoever's in office is going to be a schuck.

Wouldn't it be something if the President and the Vice President had kids. Just think of the possibility if Mondale had sex with Geraldine Ferraro. Q: It would bring us back to the Democratic party!

Chris: I think we should have a queen. Ron: Mike could be the queen. What's next; it's late; we're getting off the track.

Q: Which one of you writes your music?

Mike: I come up with the bass line and Chris will add guitar to it and we take it from there.

Q: What kind of musical training have you had?

Chris: None. Q: Nothing at all? Not even piano lessons when you were a little kid?

Mike: I took tuba.

Chris: I used to play the trombone. Ron: I had voice lessons.

Q: Now that's I don't believe. Ron: Why? What's wrong with my voice?

Chris: You went to Juilliard, didn't you?

Ron: Yeah, Julio's yard in the South Bronx.

Chris: I think you're better off teaching yourself to play, it's more interesting that way.

Mike: I never played a note of bass in my life before this.

Ron: Now look what's happened. Chris: He still can't play. He's going to start learning tomorrow.

Mike: Hey, that's bass playing extraordinaire, pal. It's a sound unto itself. I show Chris the bass line, he does something, Ron sings and Troy does what he wants. We practice a few times and it all somehow comes together. A lot of the newer songs are geared more to a rock and roll, heavy metal type of sound.

Ron: Look at hardcore, in general. It's taken a nosedive. Everybody's starting to sound the same.

Mike: It's either Circle Jerks, Minor Threat, or Black Flag.

Q: Yeah, but at least when those bands started out, they had a distinctive sound and were original.

Chris: Now what we're getting is the tenth generation of the tenth generation, and it's starting to sound really inferior. A few bands laid out the blueprints, and we were one of those bands, and everyone else took off from then. I'll respect anyone that forges their own sound. Even Van Halen forged their own sound, they didn't copy off of anybody.

Mike: It's like plagiarism. Chris: I don't want to wax nostalgic, but New York's never going to see the days like when we started out. When Max's, the Mudd Club, and the old Peppermint Lounge were booking good bands. The Ritz. Now it's just CBGB's and the Schlock Hotel.

Q: It's a two way thing. The bands sound the same but the people don't seem receptive to anything that's different. It's become a scene.

Mike: Hardcore's been around a long time and it's getting to be depressing and fucking boring like everything else. What I see is a lot of trendiness, it's a drag to me, I don't know, I just don't relate to it anymore. I always have to be alienated whether it be from highschool, college, hardcore... I just can't fit in, you know what I mean? I got no satisfaction out of fitting in, I always have to feel like the outcast.

Q: Is that why you got into punk? As a counterculture type of thing?

Mike: Originally, that was the reason, until it got so fucking trendy and popular.

Ron: Bands that I knew about like five other people knew about.

Now everyone's catching onto it. Screeedriver for instance. Burzooks was another one, even the fucking Sex Pistols if you want to come right down to it, but at the time it was really cool cause no one knew about them. Now every Tom Dick and Harry knows about it and it sort of ruins it.

Q: What about mass acceptance, when you go on tour, do you want people to come, or what?

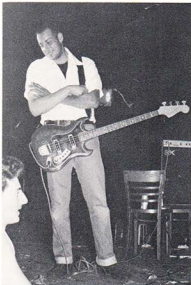
Ron: Sure I do.

Mike: You have to live, you have to pay bills. We've been living in limbo the past 5 years, we ain't young anymore, we ain't kids.

Chris: There's nothing wrong with mass acceptance as long as your not lowering the quality of what you're doing. You can't make it like processed cheese spread so that everybody can eat it.

Q: As long as people come to you because of what you're doing and not the other way around.

Chris: That's why we've been around so long. We're waiting for people to come to us. We're not moving the mountain to them. If we were going into the studio to make records that were going to sell, we could get a really fantastic big name producer, throw in a few guest artists, dig up dead Sex Pistols & have them play, but we didn't go in there with the thought of making a product.



"Hardcore's been around a long time and it's getting to be depressing and fucking boring like everything else."

BEACON THEATRE, JULY 13'th

by Ken Messner

Mike: He still sold 50,000 records. Nothing to sneeze at. We landed a major record deal. I work hard and believe in what I do. If I get paid off money wise, that's better still. If I had the choice between having money or not having money, I'd take the money. Anyone who says that they wouldn't is a hypocrite.

Ron: When hardcore and punk fades away and those people disappear, we'll still be around.

Q: You'll keep doing the nihilists?

Ron: Till we're fucking dead.....

Q: What's the story with this place? I heard there's a boycott or something?

Q: I don't know. The last time I was here was about a year ago and it was packed.

Ron: Someone told me that the kids were boycotting it because one time some bands played and the bouncers came and beat everybody up.

Q: It's too bad because this is one of the only places out here that's been booking hardcore aside from a drive into N.Y. What are they going to do if they live all the way out here?

Chris: Listen to that! Do you hear the frustrated musicians playing in there! There's a real scandal going on there. I want you to report this.

Ron: This fucking place screwed us. They told us it would be packed, didn't mention anything about a boycott.

Q: Will you be doing anymore shows?

Ron: Next show will be at C.B.G.B.

Chris: It's got a lot of atmosphere and the sound system is really good and Hilly is a good friend of ours. He takes care of us. Silly Hilly we call him. Right to his face.

Ron: Right to his 2 faces.

Chris: Last time we played there we got \$300.00.

Ron: He cheated us out of our money.

Mike: We paid everyone's dues. We paved the way for all these other bands. There's one thing you can't run from and that's your fucking self. That's all—

Let's go.

Siouxie and the Banshees have been a driving force in punk since the late '70's. From their creation in 1976 up to the present, they have undergone numerous personnel changes: yet their musical direction has remained relatively constant.

Shortly before the 84 tour, Robert Smith left the Banshees to tour with The Cure, leaving Siouxie without a guitarist, the Banshees quickly landed John Valentine Carruthers to replace Smith. Thus, the 1984 tour consisted of Siouxie, Steve Nave, the only original member of the Banshees, drummer Budgie, who replaced Kenny Morris in 1979 (who replaced original drummer SID VICIOUS!) and John Valentine Carruthers.

The circumstances leading up to the show had all the requirements of forming an "EVENT": the uncertainty of personnel, the relatively long advance notice of the show, the subsequent additional show, and the general inaccessibility of seeing the Banshees live -- they have toured the states only once before. More often than not, "Events" have a way of not living up to their billing. Not so here, the Banshees performance was superb.

The show opened up with Crossfire Choir. In respect to Crossfire, the less said the better.

Those familiar with Siouxie and the Banshees' music know its predominantly mystic, demonic sound. The presentation of the show was in perfect keeping with the theme. The set was minimal and the band members dressed and situated in a manner which dra-

matically reinforced the music and lyrical themes. With most bands, presentation is secondary; however, with Siouxie, I don't think form & content can be separated. The show is as much her style of presentation as it is the music itself.

The Banshees opened up with "Dazzle". The set consisted of just three groups of stark white spotlights, aimed straight up. John & Steve, dressed in a combination jumpsuit/catholic priest gown, flanked Siouxie (obviously center stage) with Budgie situated on a drum platform behind her. Throughout, John & Steve played with an indifferent, passionless demeanor. This combination of the stark, minimal set and the icon-like triad of John, Steve & Budgie dramatically set off Siouxie while she reeled, as if possessed throughout the show. Siouxie's desultory mood, one second impassioned, the next passionless, reinforced the music as they moved towards their final crescendo. Siouxie's movements seemed affected; at one instant she moves as a bird, then suddenly she'd appear serpentine, her body undulating snake-like.

The material covered was mostly off of *JuJu & A Kiss in the Dreamhouse*. The sound throughout was quite good. John Valentine Carruthers fit in rather well and Siouxie's vocals were exceptionally clear. Both Steve's & Budgie's performances were more than adequate. The performance was a bit shorter than I would have liked, but then, I could listen to them all night. At least they sent us off with a magnificent rendition of "Monitor" as an encore.

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BLACK FLAG, SISTERS OF MERCY

RITZ, NYC, AUGUST 9'th

by Joan McNally & Ron Gregorio

"Sisters of Mercy" appeared as the opening band for "Black Flag" at the Ritz on Aug. 9.

Originally from Leeds, England, the band has come a long way in performance and popularity since their American debut in Sept. 1983. Most noticeable of the changes is that lead singer, Andrew Eldritch, has definitely come into his own. At their first U.S. gig at Danceteria, Andrew Eldritch had a deep, rich voice and a steamy, sexy singing style but looked, and to some extent acted pretty much like a Jim Morrison clone. Thursday night the Morrison influence was still present, but more evident was the emergence of Eldritch's own persona and stage presence. Another difference is that they have added smoke to their stage show. Some may find it childish, but having seen their show with it and without it, the smoke definitely heightens the mysterious quality exuded by Eldritch and the band in general.

They opened with the creepy, crawly "ReptileHouse" and played a number of favorites throughout the night including "My Heartland", "Alice", "Anaconda" and "Body and Soul" from their latest e.p., Eldritch, clad as always in black, in his sunglasses and signature slouch pose sounded stronger than ever. He looked great too, due at least in part to the excellent light show.

One of the few disappointments of the evening was that they did not play "Temple of Love". It's one of their finest songs and really should have

been included as part of the show.

Other than that, the "Sisters" put on a great show of psychedelic sound and wound up the night with "Gimme Shelter" for the encore.

Joan

Having never been a Black Flag fanatic, I can honestly say that after this show I've done a 180° turnabout. Like a lot of people I know, I liked the older stuff (Nervous Breakdown, Jealous Again, Damaged) but never really warmed up to "My War", especially the slower stuff on Side 2. After seeing Black Flag twice the previous week (Skateway Roller Rink & City Gardens), I still felt the same. Perhaps, I was too busy taking pictures and selling magazines to notice. At the Ritz, I specifically went to see the show and I was completely overwhelmed. Henry told us that he works out everyday and I can see where he'd need to in order to put out on stage as much as he does. You can't help but to get into the music while watching Henry ripping the place up. The energy he puts across, combined with the music's intensity makes for REAL entertainment. Greg & Keera played flawlessly, although Greg sometimes seems too interested in showcasing his talent with long guitar solos (Yuk!)

They opened with "Nervous Breakdown" and "Can't Explain", then mixed in a variety of old favorites such as

"6 Pack" and "Jealous Again" with new songs, some from their unreleased, forthcoming album. Finishing up with a few slower, pounding songs like "Nothing Left Inside".

After seeing far too many soundalike, thrasher bands, it's a real pleasure to see one of the originals seize the moment and show everyone what "Alternative Music" is. Whether you like them or not, you must admit that Black Flag helped build the bandwagon, they didn't jump on it once it was already rolling. Nothing wrong with that really except that it's difficult to distinguish yourself & your sound from all the others that were influenced by the same bands, and everybody starts to sound the same. Not so with Black Flag. Of course, just because something is new it's not necessarily good, but in my opinion (for whatever it's worth) this is great stuff, especially live.

Ron

P.s. I think the Sisters of Mercy are a rip-off of the Joy Division. Sorry Joan, but being the editor, I can get away with this.

ELDRITCH





BLACK FLAG INTERVIEW

"WE'RE INTO A WILDER APPROACH-ANYTHING GOES-
AND THAT'S THE SCAM."

by Krishna Jan

Black Flag is one band that needs no introduction. Besides, we're running past deadline. See the review of the Bita show on pp. 6 for more details. Here's a conversation that took place at the Skateway Roller Rink on August 3rd before their set.

Krishna: A lot of people were surprised when My War came out. First off, nothing had been out from Black Flag for two years, and when My War came out, it sounded a lot different than Damaged. The Village Voice said the production had a "garage-like" sound and some of the new songs were compared to Black Sabbath. Does this reflect a change in direction and philosophy from when you wrote the material for Damaged?

Greg: Black Flag has never had a fixed "thing", so there's no new change of direction that people suspect—it's just that we've always been into doing different stuff. When Damaged came out, a lot of people went, "Oh, you guys are doing something different, what is this?"

Krishna: Yeah, because that was different than Nervous Breakdown.

Greg: Yeah, and when Jealous Again came out, people went, "Oh, you're doing something different." It's nothing new for us.

Henry: It happens whenever we release a record.

Greg: I'm sure the next time we release a record, people will say, "How come you didn't stay with the My War sound?" That's just our thing. We're not going to be like all those heavy metal bands that get a successful style and stick with it for commercial reasons; because that's what so much of the public wants.... a safe thing. They want to know what their band is going to sound like—it's safe—they don't have to think. They can just bash their heads around or slam, and there's no problems. It's real safe that way, but that's not us. People like that should go see Iron Youth or whatever.

Henry: G.B.I.I.

Greg: G.B.I.I. you know... (ha ha)

Henry: Disfrag, all of them... (ha ha)

Greg: That's just not us. We like to do different stuff. My War is a certain amount... we had a lot of songs saved up.

Krishna: Yeah, I heard you had two albums worth of stuff but you couldn't record legally, and you actually got in trouble for putting on a show or recording.

Greg: Well, for the Everything Went Black thing, but still, we have another album we recorded BEFORE My War.

Krishna: Family Man?

Greg: No, it's called Ship it In. Family Man is a spoken word and instrumental album.

Bill: Did you tell them about the live cassette?

Greg: Oh yeah. We're going to put out a live cassette, about an hour long. It's on Nixon records, a new label we started for more experimental stuff. As something comes up, stuff we don't put on "ST" we'll put on Nixon. SST is real busy right now, so we're able to put this out on the side.

Ron: Why on cassette?

Greg: We wanted to make stuff available and not make a big deal out of it, and also, we could put a whole hour on tape where it would have to be a double album on record.

Ron: What about a video cassette?

Greg: We'd like to, but we haven't gotten to it yet.

Krishna: For My War, did you go in with a specific idea for the whole album, or was it just a group of songs that reflected the mood that you were in at the time?

Greg: It was a certain group of songs.... Some of them we had been playing live for a couple of years, and some of them were real new.



GREG

"Nothing Left Inside" and "Scream", we'd been doing for a couple of years. We divided some of the material up between My War and Ship it In, which will be coming out shortly.

Krishna: Do you think you're more "experimental" now, or have you always been experimental?

Greg: I think we've always been real experimental, but now maybe we're a little more experimental and improvised.

Krishna: To you think your musicianship has improved, does that have something to do with it? or do you just play.

Greg: That kind of terminology, "musicianship" it just... What we do is on the records, it's for you to decide. We play what we play. If people like it, it's good musicianship, if they don't like it, it's bad musicianship, so there. To me it's good because it's what we want to do. Damaged was good, we're proud of that; that's what we wanted to do at the time Jealous Again. Nervous Breakdown, all that stuff, and we're really happy with My War. If people don't like it, that's OK. Maybe they want to hear Billy Squire, sometimes I do.

Krishna: I heard that the first time you went over to England, you had a lot of problems with people expecting spikes, leather, etc... I was wondering, was that anyone of a hassle?

Greg: Well, this was the third time we'd been over there and now people are a lot more tuned in with what we're doing. We don't have that kind of problem now and it's real fun for us over there. It's just like here, same kind of thing. We come out with new stuff, and there's a reaction at first, but then it sinks in.

Ron: If you do something different, people start saying that you're not punks anymore.

Greg: Yeah, but then someone puts on a thrash gig and nobody shows up. I mean, who really wants to hear that music?

Krishna: In small doses it's OK.

Greg: I've only met a few people who actually like it, and those are the same people who complain about other people changing. Fuck that, generic hardcore, generic music. They're just like the old heavy metal bands.

Ron: It's what we were trying to get rid of in the first place, and they're trying to bring it back.

Greg: Generic, it was inevitable, I knew that was going to happen. The same thing has happened to all kinds of music throughout history. The thing is, there's always going to be a certain element to fight that, and we're definitely a part of that minority element that doesn't just want to milk a commercial thing. We're into a wilder approach—anything goes—and that's the scam.

REMINISCENCE OF A DRAFT DODGER

"I SAID I'M NOT GOING
AND THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE
ME."

by Ron Gregorio

Many people consider the Vietnam war to be a dead issue, a noble cause that faded, something that doesn't affect them now. This attitude is appalling considering the situation in Central America. The present events there correspond too closely with those of Southeast Asia during the early 60's, yet few people are committing themselves to end the "covert" participation of U.S. troops in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The following conversation discloses the personal experience of someone who decided to stand against the war and suffer the consequences of the decision after the government was already involved in an action that was contrary to his beliefs.

Q: You said you were a resister during the war. How did this come about?

A: In 1962, the Friday before the Cuban Missile Crisis, I joined the Marines. It was a weird kind of thing. I was going to College at the time and I was a member of mine was in the reserves and John Kennedy was president and there was this feeling of, things were more liberal, there's a new administration, it's a youthful thing even though Kennedy as we know was just as anti-communist as anyone else, but it was a different way of being anti-communist. It was a more educated way, we felt, and I went into the OCS program. It was called the FOC program and I got commissioned in 1964. June of '64, which was two months before the Gulf of Tonkin. (The incident used to justify heightened U.S. involvement in Vietnam) I went to law school for a year so they deferred me, but then I started active duty and I dropped out after a few months. I was on active duty and after getting through basic training I just wanted to prove to myself that I could make it there. Once it happened I had no interest in being in the Marine Corp anymore. As an officer, they'd let you resign but after you resigned you're commissioned. Then what happens is that you're eligible for the draft if you haven't served enough active duty. So, I was on my commission, that was in 1965, October '65, and I wasn't political at the time. I mean I'd like to tell you that I was against Vietnam but I was sort of gunn-ho at

the time. I just joined the Marines for my own little shick-it had nothing to do with the country. As a matter of fact, a lot of Marines don't even like the country, they just like the Marine Corp and their loyalty is to the Marine Corp, they don't give a shit about anything else. So I went back to N.Y. and the draft board said I was finished. Initially they said "O.K., you've got a 4-A classification, we won't take you." Then they reclassified me when they went through the file again. Being in a middle class neighborhood, everybody in the neighborhood would go to psychology and a doctor and they were getting deferred, they were getting out of going. So, they went through the files again and they said, "You don't have enough active duty so we're taking you back in." I said, "I'm not going," and they didn't believe me. They told me to report at such and such a place at such and such a time. I didn't want to go and then I said to myself, how can I support the war if I'm not willing to be in it myself. That was the beginning.

Q: Why didn't you want to go? You said you weren't really political, was it that you didn't want to get shot at?

A: It wasn't so much that I was afraid of getting shot at as much as there was this feeling that I had at the time that I didn't want to be a sucker. The way I saw it at the time was that Cardinal Spellman, who was the Cardinal for N.Y.C., my father told me what a right-wing anti-semitic the guy was—he was supporting the war in Vietnam to a tremendous degree, and it looked like to me just trying to bolster the Diem family in Vietnam in a Buddhist country. They were trying to push Catholicism and to me it looked like, why should I, a Jewish guy back Catholicism against Buddhism. It made no sense to me.

Q: You said you knew of Diem and the problems he was having with the Buddhists. Do you think most people were that well informed at the time?

A: No. You see, I was a political science major in college and my family was liberal and they thought I was crazy for joining the Marines but I was really against the so called liberalism at the time. Liberalism made no sense to me. It looked like it was insincere, that it was bullshit, that people didn't really mean what they were saying. There was no left, it had been purged during the McCarthy years. A lot of the people at College were CIA plants, we found out later on. One guy's name was Alan Ballard, and he was always putting down the Soviet Union in his lectures and one day this guy comes up to me and said, "Did you know that this guy Ballard used to work for the State Department and he was in the CIA?" It was only the ultra-right and then there were the liberals. The ultra-right at least say what they

believed in. The liberals were supporting the Vietnam war initially and most of them didn't know what was really going on. I was twenty-two years old, very mature, but I think most people didn't know anything about the war, even after the Gulf of Tonkin. I was excited—wow, here's a war and here I am in the reserves—but no one gave a shit. They went along with the war lives, they very couldn't care less, they cared about who they were going to have sex with. These were college kids and they really didn't give a shit, it wasn't going to affect them. The draft was very small then. In '64, if a person was married, they wouldn't be drafted, so guys were getting married. I remember one guy, he actually put an ad in the College newspaper and he said, "Married-girl to get married," and woman, girl—no physical contact, this is no joke." He just wanted a woman to legally marry him, they wouldn't live together, they would not have sex, and that would be it. These kinds of things were going on at the time.

I had an experience in the Marine Corps and it was very strange, I was in Virginia and there was a guy in the South Vietnamese Marine Corps and they were training him with us. He spoke French, and I knew French so we were able to communicate. They'd show Doris Day movies on the base and I would translate the plot. Sometimes we would eat lunch together, that kind of thing. I met him one morning at a Sunday mass, and he asked me why I didn't go to church. I told him I don't go to church, I'm Jewish. He thought everyone in the U.S. was Christian and we shook hands. Then about a month later he disappeared. I figured he got transferred somewhere else. Then the Major calls me in and says, "Did you hear anything from Tok?" I said no. He said, "you'd been seen with him" and I said, "Yeah but I didn't say anything to the guy," because I didn't want to get in any trouble. He says, "He's a communist." You know what the guy did? He went back to Hanoi, he was in the NLF all along and he somehow infiltrated the South Vietnamese Marine Corp and

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got sent to Washington and as a final thing like to say, up yours, he mailed a letter through Canada I guess he had a contact there that said, "Thank you very much for the instruction I received." The Marine Corps was so stupid that they told every one of us that you have to watch out because these people are so sneaky, that's the kind of people they are, but it undermined their legitimacy because if you can't trust any of the Vietnamese, I guess the NLF had more support than they were letting on. He (the Vietnamese) had his ribbons he was wearing, I asked who's that for fighting and he said the French and ten years later he's fighting the U.S. and it was a very strange thing because he was a very nice guy and he was one of the few people down there that wasn't a racist and now I could see why. That was before I resigned.

"WITH VIETNAM: WE WAITED TOO LONG BEFORE WE GOT INVOLVED IN THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT."

They sent me a draft notice in 1967 so I went to Canada ten days before I was supposed to show up. I was in Canada from '67 to '72. I also went to Israel for a year and my friends who were progressive told me not to go there because it was part of U.S. imperialism but I didn't want to believe it and I figured that I didn't like Canada that much and I couldn't return to the states, so I went to Israel. I got to see what it was like to live in a third world country that is actually run by the U.S. I mean it was like a puppet army, like Nicaragua before the revolution. After a year I came back to Canada and I started writing letters and articles supporting the Palestinians in the newspapers and I was getting these letters, phone calls and hate letters as you'd expect. Then some people in my family stopped talking to me. They were angry at me but they were more upset because they couldn't delegitimize what I was saying because I lived there and they didn't. They were just sending money and that was it.

In 1972, I came back to the states illegally because I was out of money and it was impossible to get a job in Canada at that time. The phone was in my wife's name and I was going to work. I got indicted but didn't get arrested. I lived like that until 1977, when I got pardoned by Carter. Everybody did automatically, but before that it was a nervousness that you're going to go to jail and that kind of thing. I was very careful, I imagined that they tapped my phone. It was kind of scary after a while and my wife was very nervous during that time.

When I was in Canada I went to a lot of demonstrations and when I saw a camera I'd hide my face. To show you how much they were really after me, I went to Canada in 1967

as I told you, and six months later my father died and my mother knew I would try to go to the funeral. At the funeral home, a man walked in and looked around. My father was a principal of a school and one of my cousins asked the man who he was and he said he was once a student of my father's. Now if this were true, he would have walked up to one of the other teachers and said "remember me, I was in school in this year" and that kind of thing, but nobody recognized him and he didn't introduce himself to anybody. When he left, my cousin followed him to the door and when he reached the door he put his finger up and a car came, not a taxi, and he left in it. A little while later I was indicted. Back then they had clerks reading the obits. When my father died they had three lines saying that he was a principal and that he was survived by his wife and his son and things like that. I heard about people actually getting arrested at the cemetery. The FBI would show up and say, "We're sorry your father died, as soon as the service is over you'll have to come with us." With Vietnam, we waited too long before we got involved in the anti-war movement. As soon as Americans start dying in large numbers, then the ruling class has a built in trump card. They can say, "You're stabbing our boys in the back..." Our brave

boys are dying and you don't give a shit about them."

The way to deal with it is to stop the war before it starts. You have to get out there before the American soldiers start dying in large numbers because once they do everyone of them is a hostage because how are you going to tell some guy's mother that her son died for nothing. You can't. She doesn't want to hear that and will probably end up yelling at you rather than at the U.S. government who killed her son.

Q: How much of a role do you think the demonstrations played in ending U.S. involvement in the war?

A: I remember that after a while it became disconcerting because Johnson would escalate the war after every demonstration. I told my wife that it seems to be the thing that every time there's a demonstration. The bigger it is, the more Johnson escalates the war to prove that he's not going to be influenced by the demonstrations. What he was influenced by was that the NLF kicked his ass and I think that's what really ended the war in Vietnam—the NLF. The important thing about the anti-war movement in the U.S. was not that we ended the war because the NLF did, but that the anti-war movement encouraged a lot of people to resist the war and the government.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU TAKE?

Based On a true story



MINUTEMEN

" WE HAD TO GROW UP BEING CLONES AND
NOW THESE GUYS ARE CLONES THROUGH THEIR
OWN FREE WILL . "

by Ron Gregorio

DATELINE: July 25th 1984

Shortly after the release of their new lp, *Double Rickles on the Time*, the Minutemen blow into Trenton N.J. for a performance at the City Gardens. With a back catalogue of over 100 songs from past releases, the show promised (and delivered) a varied overview of past achievements with an eye toward the future. Following an ill-advised opening set by Krank, (the Spinal Tap of the N.J. heavy metal scene, too pathetic to describe in detail) the Men took the stage for a blistering evening of music. *Hard Times* spoke to bassist Mike Watt and guitarist D.Boon after the show.



Ron: Who was that opening band? Did you guys pick them out? That was Spinal Tap, wasn't it?

D.Boon: That was Krank, with two K's. Ron: They were pretty funny.

Mike: Yeah, I know. Do you know that song "Cut"? I wrote that for Black Flag, because they were infatuated with that whole thing.

Ron: What kind of clubs do you normally book in? Is it mostly hardcore type places?

Mike: Oh man, from a storefront in Eugene, Oregon to a big old hall like this here. A lot is hardcore but we've played with top 40 bands too. We consider ourselves a punk rock band.

Ron: How long have you been playing together?

Mike: Me and D.Boon have been playing together for about twelve years. The Minutemen have been around four years. We didn't start the Minutemen until the Hollywood scene kind of died and it wasn't worth going to shows so we did our own band. We never wrote our own songs until punk rock, that's why I say we're a punk rock band.

I grew up in San Pedro during the '70's, I'm 26 now, and it was a very boring time to grow up there because no one was playing their own stuff. It was the Forum and California Jam scene. I wasn't old enough to go to clubs so I really don't know what was going on there. It was heavy metal cover bands doing Led Zeppelin. The best band always played last and they always did the covers better than everyone else, but they all did the same covers.

Mike: They had some shows in movie theatres but the clubs in those days didn't allow teenagers in. Not like hardcore. Now, the young guys have a lot of advantages. They do gigs, make records--and what do they do? They all end up playing the same fucking songs! It's ironic. They've got all this freedom. We had to grow up being clones and now these guys are clones through their own free will. When I was 17, I didn't know what the fuck was going on. I was doing little league!

It's a whole different reality. I think it's on purpose though because it makes everyone equal, no one sticks out.

Ron: So you think it's some sort of a conspiracy?

Mike: In a way, yes. It's a silent one. Somebody must be thinking, "Hey, we're all doing the same songs guys." In L.A., they last about eight months I'd say. It's a revolving door. If you're like that in your little town then you're the radical, but after being in Hollywood for seven years and seeing that over and over, I'm jaded, you know?

Ron: Hanging around N.Y.C. all this time it's the same thing.

Mike: New York is even older than L.A. The Tough Darts, Ramones, Misfits, Richard Hell, he was real big with me back then.

Ron: How did the Minutemen form from this dead Hollywood scene?

Mike: That last song we did, "History Lesson", that's the story of our band. First we were this band called the Reactionaries. There's this one song on the *Politics of Time* lp, "Tony gets wasted in Pedro." That's the Reactionaries. We saw the Clash and the Dils and were listening to the Jam and the Sex Pistols, stuff like that. We decided that "we ain't gonna do this. We're gonna purge ourselves of all the rock, throw out all the chords and leads." That's really where the Minutemen sound came from.

Like I said before, we consider ourselves to be a punk rock band because we never wrote any of our own music until Johnny Rotten. We said, "Fuck, we can do that. We don't have to play in our rooms anymore, we can do gigs! These other guys are doing it and they're breaking strings too."

Ron: I take it then that none of you are trained musicians.

Mike: We learned off of Blue Oyster Cult albums, Credence Clearwater, R. Rex. We learned off records, started with the easy stuff.

Ron: You seem to have a jazz influence. Where'd that come from?

Mike: I don't know. I kind of like Charlie Parker but it's just a feeling. I can't play any of that stuff. Sure, we'll stretch it any way. We're not jazz musicians at all, but people do hear that. We've played with jazz bands. We'll play with anybody. We wanted to be different from what's happening and what's



happening is the heavy guitar, real distorted, so we go to the opposite. I think there's a lot that can be done with a guitar. You don't have to go over to a synth to be different.

Ron: Who writes your music?
Mike: All three of us, all separately, music and lyrics.

Ron: On the second side of *Politics of Time*, why was the recording quality so poor?

Mike: That's the only place those songs exist.

Ron: Why didn't you re-record them?

Mike: We don't know how to play those anymore. We've written hundreds of songs and we just can't remember anymore.

That record, we thought we'd print up two thousand just for fans but it turned into more like five thousand.

Ron: What's your biggest album?
Mike: *Buzz or Howl*. We recorded it for fifty bucks and ended up selling 7000 copies.

We did it live to 2 track. You don't need a bunch of equipment. There's so many concepts in the way of music, you just go out and jam.

Ron: What about your new album. When will it be released?

Mike: *Double Nickels on the Dime* was released last week. We did that for twelve hundred dollars. We had an album ready but the Huskers said they were going to do a double album so we said, "Shit, then we're gonna do one too." So we wrote some more songs and did it.

Ron: Have you heard *Ten Arcade*? (Husker D's new LP)

Mike: Oh yeah, it's great! Minneapolis is a great town too, supportive people. Husker D is the big band there.

In L.A., we're real little. There's millions of bands. In fact, heavy metal is the big thing there. There's this club called the Troubadour and that's all they play. We can play a lot in L.A. but we're not the big cheese, no way. X is, the Blasters, things like that, Quiet Riot.

Ron: Why did you choose the name Minutemen.

Mike: We got the name from the Reactionaries. The Minutemen in the 60's were this reactionary group. It was a joke-satire, but no one knows about the Minutemen. They were right wing assholes.

Ron: I thought it was from the Minutemen of the 18th century.

Mike: But in those days they ran away! They ran away at Concord.

D.Boon: But they stood up. They had the balls to go out there and resist the government.

Mike: But they weren't really like bloody war heroes. They ran away like dogs.

Ron: But in order to win, standing up might be heroic but it also could be stupid because if they all get killed, what have they accomplished.

Mike: Like rioting against police, that's really kind of stupid. There's other ways to get to the police besides rioting.

The Minutemen ran away but they lived to fight another day. And they won.

Ron: A lot of your lyrics are political. Where does your political consciousness come from.

Mike: We're registered democrats. We've tried to get Reagan out of office. We don't say that on stage because voting's a personal thing, but I wish people wouldn't vote for Reagan and get that bastard out. I don't think Mondale would send troops to fight in Central America.

Ron: I think democrats and republicans are just a different means to the same end. They're guardians of the same system.

Mike: But it's Reagan's style that gets all these right

wingers hot and I'm not into that. They want to put prayer into the schools. Democrats don't want to do that. It's their style. That's why I side with the democrats, not any of these self righteous bastards.

The anarchy party in America is the libertarians. They want to make the rich men free and they'll take care of us, right?

Ron: Oh yeah, "Capitalism will run itself." That's a great idea.

I always liked that song, "Working Men are Pissed", it's one of my favorites.

Mike: Thanks. A lot of people think only rich people dream because they have the time, but working people dream too. George is a machinist, D.Boon is a carpenter and I'm a para-legal for a lawyer.



That's our story basically. We're trying to show people that working men dream, because we're all workers. Punk rock is for playing what you want.

VINYL!

by Rich Kearney

& Mike Dillon

Corrosion Of Conformity -
Eye For An Eye (No Core)

I guess Strom Thurmond can bring out the best in some people, as this North Carolina band demonstrates on their debut album. The energy and enthusiasm that drive *Eye For An Eye* are rooted in several things, but I would bestow top honors on Reed Mullen's drumming (easily among the best I've heard this year), which serves to lead the rest of the band through an assortment of styles (including a rather generic section on side 2, done in a sort of off-handed "we can do it too" manner). I thought I'd never see the day when a Southern band would do a song called "Redneckkkk." (with 3 K's - GET IT?) but C.O.C. thrash right on through it with flair. Their straight edge dedication yields a decent anthem in "No Drunk," while their political themes are most often set forth in simple dichotomies like "Coexist" and the juxtaposed "Positive Outlook/Negative Outlook."

As befits a band with diverse interests, the music reflects several of the musical styles that makes the South what it is (especially a muted blues feel on some of the slower pieces), and they even do a good cover of (believe it or not) Fleetwood Mac's "Green Manalishi," but don't mistake them for "country punk" along the lines of Rank and File. Rather, they appear as punks from the country - in many ways representative of the new South.

Every band that's ever been stifled out of a gig because they didn't fit a club's "image" should hear "Excluded." We can't play your clubs because of your restrictions, dress codes, rules, and age limits. And if you're not ready to protest it, then listen to the last line on the album: "Nothing's gonna change while you're sitting on your ass."

Well, what do you know - they're still rebels down there, thank god!

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The Faith - Subject To Change
(Dischord)

If the ghost of Minor Threat seems to linger over this record, just chalk it up to the fact that with Ian MacKaye in the producer's chair and his brother Alex on vocals, certain similarities are bound to emerge. One is a preference for two guitars, utilized best on "Aware" and "Subject To Change." Another is a somewhat disjointed lyrical style, which clicks best on "Say No More."

Where the two groups part ways, however, is evident in the less inspired instrumental work on *Dischord*. "Change," as well as in the vaguely positive vision that seems to emerge from the hell that Minor Threat ultimately became trapped in. Whether or not these two aspects are related can be a matter of debate, but I do take some comfort in the quality of feeling described in "Untitled": "It's definite but you can't define it/ The feeling's real but it's untitled."

On "Limitations," there's more food for thought in an analysis of self-defeatism, something which seems to lurk everywhere in the eyes of The Faith. Such a general philosophy designed to combat this trend may yet provide the band with material for a solid album, but the eight tracks on *Subject To Change* are worth hearing despite their flaws. Keep the faith, as it were.

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Husker Du - "Eight Miles High"/b/w
"Vaccinism World(Live)"
-Zen Arcade (GGT)

It's rare to find a cover version of a classic song which goes so far as to redefine it in a new and old way, but Husker Du have managed to pull it off with their cathartic reading of The Byrds' "Eight Miles High." Rather than just trashing the piece in disgust (common practice in hardcore), the Huskers strip away the phony psychedelia (it was never a drug song, anyway) to get at the stark center of its basic theme. Lost innocence and indecision marked the beginnings of self-conscious posturing by 1965, but here the benefit of hindsight makes for an angry rejection of the aftermath (the period in which most of us grew up). By mid-song, the vocals

have degenerated into screaming gibberish as the music is propelled forward (upward?) by the band. A classic in its own right, this version brings a relevance to the song that I never thought existed in the here and now.

The inside cover notes that "the whole thing took about 35 hours, the last 40 hours straight for mixing," but don't let that fool you into thinking that *Zen Arcade* is just a bunch of throwaways. In fact, I can't think of another debut album in the punk canon (not even London) that maybe 'cause of culture clash) that comes close to this in terms of depth or consistency. Indeed, this is far more than a punk record, as it refuses to be pinned down, labeled, or dismissed on anything but its own terms.

Of course, there are some reference points which put it into context - it would be wrong to call *Zen Arcade* "timeless." The first clue, in fact, is "Eight Miles High," which one could view as a prelude for most of the 23 tracks here. For not only is that earlier theme expanded upon, but it is carried further, through the late '60's, the '70's, and straight into the present, all the while maintaining that cutting edge which provides valuable insights to the listener.

Almost every song on *Zen Arcade* can be approached from a personal, direct level (as opposed to a generalized method), and each one addressed some aspect of what I'll call "the wreckage of the era": betrayal, alienation, pain, egoism, emotional suffocation, and isolation. Prime examples include "What's Going On (Inside My Head)," a real rocker (with piano accompaniment, no less!) which goes on venting about basic solipsism in one easy lesson:

"I was talking
When I should have been listen-
ing/ I didn't hear a word/
That anyone said/ It must not
have been so very important/
'cus I was concerned about
instead/ What's Goin On/
What's Goin On/
What's Goin On/
Inside My Head."

Such economy in words doesn't always speak volumes, but Hunker *does* seem to have the knack for making it work every time. Other "minute" observations include "Hare Krisna," which will have you drawing ever fuzzier lines between the cultists and the men from Maytag.

Personality sketches such as "Broken Home, Broken Heart" and "Pink Turns to Blue" are treated with degrees of sensitivity so as to make its characters come alive. The best of these is "Whatever," apparently about the aforementioned solipsism carried to its logical (yet tragic) end in a teenage suicide.

Where does it all lead? Sporadic bursts of anger and frustration on "Indecision Time" and "Somewhere" lead us into side 4, in which we're encouraged to "Turn On The News," if for no better reason than to find out that we're not alone "with all this uptight pushing and shoving" that keeps us away from who we're loving." This leads straight into "Enclosing 'Reoccurring Dreams,'" a 14-minute instrumental that feeds on the raw feelings which hold the album together, making it more than just an exercise in virtuosity.

Throughout *Zen Arcade*, the Hunkers finally establish themselves beyond a doubt as a band to be reckoned with (something that was only prefigured on last year's *Metal Circus E.P.*). Bob Mould's guitar deserves special mention here, but both bassist Greg Norton and drummer Grant Hart have developed their chops to a remarkable level, which I imagine is almost imperative if one wishes to play at the speeds often reached on the album. All cuts are recommended, so do yourself a favor and LISTEN TO THIS RECORD! (or dance to it, for that matter).

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U.S. Chaos - We've Got The Weapons

OIIIOIIIO! I don't want to sound like a reactionary, but this is a hell of a way to pay respect to your influences. The Bloomfield-based quartet have obviously spent time listening to Johnny Thunders, The Sex Pistols, and Sham 69 in order to create the sound they get on this E.P., but even the best laid plans.... First off, a pretty good guitar sound gets tried fast when put up against vocalist Skully's lifeless voice (even when it's not set on monotone, he seems to put little effort into his singing - he even seems to affect a pseudo-British accent on the title track, a would-be anthem). Elsewhere, what was once hailed as "the spirit of '77" is freeze-dried into some tired clichés.

Then there's the songs.... "I'm An American," "Guns By My Side," and "U.S. Chaos" all exude the kind of mentality that I once thought was restricted to only the most wretched country music (come to think of it, this stuff wouldn't sound too out of place on WNN). Actually, it's been pretty apparent for some time that the ideological struggle in the hardcore/punk scene has been moving most prominently to either complete nihilism or right-wing disgust, something to rally a flag around I suppose. Luckily, the right hasn't come up with a very good record in *We've Got The Weapons* - but let's see what happens tomorrow.

7 CHURCH ST.
BLOOMFIELD, N.J. 07003

The Fiends-We've Come For Your Best Enigma Records by Mike Dillon

It's always been apparent to this writer that hardcore music-for the most part--in order to avoid becoming sentimental and preachy the way other forms of socially responsible music have become in the past, has needed to define itself as an almost exclusively sarcastic representation of the facets of mainstream society it was attacking at any given moment. The most effective hardcore statements--such as "TV Party" and "Six Pack" by Black Flag, or "Police Truck" by the Dead Kennedys--create a scenario in which the band members (particularly the lead singer) assume the nentialities and lifestyles of the people they are most attempting to condemn.

While the Fiends, on their new LP *We've Come For Your Best*, do produce traces of that sort of "strategic commentary," it is, however, their own restricted vision which undermines their statements and identifies them as suburbanites unable to commit themselves to the hardcore scene to which they aspire.

For instance, a song like "Die, Bob, Die," which calls for the demise of octogenarian congressman Bob Hope, seems to be as useless and self-defeating as Seneca's execution by the Athenian state, or as dumb and childish as Country Joe McDonald's "Fish Cheer" at Woodstock. The sort of cheap sentiment that "Die, Bob, Die" provides is as cliché and photocopied as any one of a hundred-thousand headbasher's kill-the-establishment anthems; mandating the death of anyone who "lives and drop off at any moment any just attracts" unneeded criticism from the "straight" sectors of society which, had they not been distracted by that sort of thought, may've been influenced positively by a more well-versed idea elsewhere on the album. It's the same sort of numbskullish rebelliousness that Billy Idol exhibits while he's mugging through one of sub-moronic "concept" videos.

And while "Die, Bob, Die" is completely misguided, it's the songs where the Fiends do attempt backhanded commentary that the group's limitations as both conceptualists and punks appear. A song like "Krankhaft" with its blatant ambiguity could've been a real damnation of the prototypical sex-hungry guy, complete with sleeveless muscle shirt and tenaxed hair. But because of it's weak lyrical content (even for a hardcore song), the song comes off as more of a glorification of zipless teen sex than as a criticism. The same sort of misaimed and ineffective commentary is evident on "Riot in the Men's Room" and "Sexual Explosion," both of which suffer from the same lyrical poverty.

While most of the songs on *We've Come For Your Best* do contain the aforementioned problems, "Rock All Night" is a song which indicates that the Fiends may be capable of developing into a band of convictions--at least of opportunist poses and scene-making gestures. "Rock All Night" is the most effectively sarcastic song on *We've Come For Your Best*--its lyrics are sharp and complete; vocalist/punkist Scott Brown's snarling on it is comparable to the yelping of Jello Biafra. Hopefully, "Rock All Night" is an indication of things to come from the Fiends--not just a surgeon in a sea full of flukes.

Rich

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SIX BANDS for SIX DOLLARS

CUANDO CENTER, NYC, AUGUST 4'th

Vatican Commandos, Riistetyt, Ultra Violence, Battalion of Saints, Corrosion of Conformity, Raw Power.

by Les Welter

The Cuando center seemed the perfect place for a show, large and open with nothing to break, and I couldn't wait to see the first American tour by two European hardcore bands. But problems existed before the show even started: a woefully inadequate p.a. system and negative elements among the crowd.

All was well as the Vatican Commandos started the show. From Conn. the Commandos were energetic with lots of slow-fast fast-slow tempo changes. The guitarist's sometimes psychedelic guitar work was good and their version of Paranoid was the best yet. Unfortunately the vocals were barely audible (a problem which was going to become much worse).

Yes things were looking up but who are these Rod Stewart clones taking the stage? One of the major disappointments of the show, Riistetyt. I've heard some really great Scandinavian hardcore bands but this was not one of them. The audience was throwing beer cans and chanting "go home" by the end of their set by Riistetyt must be given credit for coming all the way from Finland to play. With their early '70s costumes, mid '70s sound, and "everybody put your hands together" stage moves Riistetyt should be a big hit on the rock club circuit.

Ultra Violence played next to an enthusiastic crowd which obviously adored the hometown boys. UV plays loud, aggressive, paint by the numbers hardcore. After one song you had heard all they have to offer, nothing new here.

At this point the slam-happy morons made us all aware of their presence by slamming anything and everything including a woman on crutches. Yes everyone was impressed by their manhood. May I suggest they enlist in Ronald Reagan's army where their obvious talents can be put to better

use during his next invasion. At this point I must give credit to another breed of mindless attention seekers who ignored the bands to concentrate on drug consumption. Fortunately they congregated in the courtyard for an all night competition which the rest of us could ignore.

The Battalion of Saints reputation as a metal hardcore band doesn't seem to be deserved. In fact they sounded thin, in sound and conviction. They went through the motions but there was no emotion. The song they put the most into was a Motorhead cover which was their set highpoint. The p.a. sighed its last two thirds of the way through the Battalion of Saints set. After working on the p.a. for forty five minutes Corrosion of Conformity came on. From this point on the vocals were completely inaudible.

From North Carolina, Corrosion of Conformity was the surprise of the evening. I saw C.o.C. a year ago in Boston and they were good, but tonight they were awesome. The rest of the night was quickly forgotten as C.o.C. blistered my ears. As tight as any band anywhere, C.o.C. has interesting song structures, wicked guitar, and the best drummer next to Bill Stevenson. There is no reason why they shouldn't go to the top, C.o.C. goes all out. This band deserves your support.

C.o.C. was a hard act to follow but Raw Power rose to the occasion. Hailing from Italy, Raw Power delivers its name. With two good and raucous guitarists and a piledriver rhythm section, Raw Power subscribes to the wall of sound theory. Particularly good was one long and grungy song which kept you guessing. Their vinyl must be great, I hope Raw Power tours here again.

It's too bad that C.o.C. and Raw Power had to play to a half empty hall, but those that stayed got their money's worth. With all the money made on beer sales (1.50 a beer and many, many cases sold) maybe the shows organizers will get a bigger p.a. next time. Thick heads stay home.



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