

MASS MOVEMENT

27

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Well, here it is folks, a little late (about two weeks or so), our Summer Spectacular Mass Movement 27. It's a little bigger than our usual issues, and hopefully it'll last you all Summer, or until Mass Movement 28 appears. Either way, it's been a great issue to work on, and I think that all of the interviews and features are some of the best that we've ever published. Right, that's enough from me, enjoy then issue, have a great Summer and we'll see you for Mass Movement 28...

Tim Mass Movement, July 2010

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MASS MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

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D.O.A., probably (as far as I'm concerned anyways) the best punk rock band in the world, have recently sent their thirteenth studio album, 'Talk – Action = 0', which gave me a perfect excuse (like I needed one anyways) to phone Joey Keithley to play catch up and chat about all things DOA

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

Photos by Bev Davies, Kevin Staitham & Michael Loccisano

MM: What have you guys been up to between Northern Avenger and Talk Minus Action? (I know there was a hockey album in the middle eh?)

Joe: We recorded two new tracks for that. It was just a thing for Canada, to reassert ourselves as kings of the ice hockey world... that DOA was the equivalent of it you know (laughing) Basically we've done a lot of tours. We went to China in January '09 and went to Europe although unfortunately not to the UK we're hoping to do that next year, but we did festivals in Germany. Then we recorded another album then there was another big tour, and we've just got back from that, then we're heading off to the States in about a week. I also wrote the book... You know the book and the movie Hardcore Logo? Well a friend of mine, he's theatrical and he's written a theatrical version of it so we had a lot of fun thinking about actors that could be punk rockers which took a while, then we had to try to train them how to play the part.

MM: Hardcore Logo is loosely based on you guys right...?

Joe: Yeah, the first quarter of the book really follows the DOA storyline, so the association makes sense.

MM: A lot of the reviews for Talk Minus Action have said that it's kind of your roots album, do you think that's a valid comment?

Joe: I think that's a fair assessment. This album has a bit less production – and I mean that in a good way. It's a lot looser; we wrote the songs and then we rehearsed it for a bit then went into the studio, and the good thing is that we would use an entire tape, we wouldn't cut it up with pro tools to create something on the tape that we couldn't play – we just played it so the whole thing was really loose.

MM: So the whole thing has a bit more of a live feeling...

Joe: Yeah... I think it's important with our kind of music, or with any great rock music. You can take it into the studio and give it some production, take in extra tracks, lay over guitar tracks and so on but in the end you've gotta have the sound coming from a place like you mean it. I think we've done that.

MM: What I've found funny about the album is that you've got an Ode to Star Trek. Are you Star Trek fans at all?

Joe: It was big when I was a kid and then I started watching it again recently. What I liked about that was when writing the lyrics – so opposed to modern day heroes and personalities where everything is about what you have, the bling and so on you can write about a fictional character who goes out and does the right thing just because it's the right thing. And that's very important. So for me it's like, okay, this is so much different to the heroes of today; they do it because it's the right thing, not for money.

MM: You wrote a song for the new album called *Don't Bank on a Bank*. Do you think the banking collapse and the financial ruin that followed were inevitable?

Joe: Sure. If you think about the banks in Europe and the United States and the government response, they were all about greed. It's a great idea that people can build on their house, but I don't think that in your or my lifetime because the disparity in wealth between those who have money and those who don't just gets wider and you can't put people in houses if they've got no money. Some of these people – it's not their fault they have no money. They are paying for kids or school or whatever. It's the same, endemic over here where the real poor people ending up staying in the same house for a long time, that's not bad, not like you should move a lot unless you have to do it for your job. It just is exasperating that the administration does nothing to help these people. As long as their buddies are getting rich, who gives a fuck right?

MM: *RCMP* is obviously a song about police brutality. Do you think that is ever going to end or is there an endless cycle of the police doing exactly what they want when they want?

Joe: There's been a case lately, which is what *RCMP* is written about, that said there was no discipline, no oversight and also they've gotten to be fully happy with their tazers. There was an incident recently where they arrested a guy who didn't speak any English and they locked him up without talking to him for 11 hours. So they left him there and he's waiting 10-11 hours to find out what's going on and within 30 seconds of them opening the cell door they had tazed him. The police were saying he had a weapon but when they checked afterwards he didn't have a weapon they were just too quick to act. If you're gonna be a cop, dealing with people is part of the job. You have to tackle people and talk to them and get to the bottom of what's going on. So this song is about police brutality but also about the report in Canada on the conduct of the *RCMP*.

MM: Do you think the album title is prophetic – that talk without action really is useless?

Joe: My whole thing is that change happens naturally. If you have a good idea and you tell your friends, your neighbours, your papers, your school or the people down the block and if it is a good idea and it can effect a change people it will create a groundswell in the local people. Once you have that locally you can build it from there.

MM: Do you think that one man or one woman can make a difference?

Joe: Yeah incrementally. Obviously some people can change things more than others. Everybody can make a difference. It may not feel like much but it's worth trying. It's something I want to put out there – do not give up.

MM: It's nearly 33 years of *DOA* now isn't it Joe?

Joe: 32. It was Feb 10th the first show we ever did, I really thought that *DOA* was a really good platform for our ideas and we have fun doing it. We have fund travelling around, we have a good laugh. If we can go somewhere new as well - like when we went to China recently that was great and we went to Brazil and Argentina- so if that's your fun, we're men of action – then this is the life for you. (laughing)

MM: *DOA* are widely credited with giving the hardcore scene it's name. How do you think the hardcore scene has changed since the '80s and how do you think it compares to the '80s heyday...?

Joe: I think pretty much that the whole term has changed. Kids will say anything is hardcore – you really have to make the distinction now by calling it hardcore punk, where hardcore is a lot nastier and trashier than mainstream punk. I think that hardcore is alive and well but I think that it's changed a lot – which has to happen. First of all the change in punk fashion, but the sounds then were a lot different from the sounds 10 years later – things have to evolve – just remember that 20 years after punk was reviled you have





Blink 180 having a number one single. I would have hoped that everyone involved in hardcore would still have that revolutionary spirit which is the heart of the whole thing. It was part of what I liked about the early days of punk. I know you say that we popularised that phrase but really it just came out of our desire to be original.

MM: Do you think that punk rock is still a force for good in that it promotes a sense of political awareness, activism and self awareness?

Joe: Absolutely. It requires empowerment as part of the movement. Political awareness empowerment, whatever you want to call it, these were all the kind of things that we wanted when we got started. We wanted to reflect a real free spirit. I think that now there are kids out there who hopefully have the same attitude, and they are there among the big bands. There are some good big bands. But you see it when you go out and about before the shows and talk to people. There are people involved in the anti war movement, in the environmental movement and that's punk right?

MM: Tell us all about DOA day in Vancouver..

Joe: That was really funny. My friend just woke up and said he had an idea for the 25th anniversary. We would get a school –go to the city centre and get a school and asked if we could put on the show so we did and basically we picked up the mike afterwards and read out all this stuff like “on this day DOA did play..” “in the year... DOA won this” etc. It was a cool thing. The city helped us out to do that.

MM: How does it feel to be voted one of British Columbia's most influential people of all time?

Joe: That was really surprising. I know they had this poll, there were like 150 names on it and it was our 30th anniversary. There were a lot of writers on the list. Some dead, some almost dead and there I was with all of them I didn't really consider myself worthy to be on that list, but there I was and people were voting for me. So obviously.. I think it's one of those things like with the DOA day that people realise that they really like DOA – they may not own any records, but they have really liked what they have heard.

MM: it's been nearly 6 years since "I Shithead" was released. Are you going to write another book?

Joe: As a matter of fact in about two hours I will be in a meeting with the publisher of that book to talk about the next book. It won't be out by the Fall but hopefully January, February. What it's going to be is pictures. Posters stories – so you may get a picture and it will have a story to go with it or a poster – not very long winded but a quarter page, half page something like that. Together, the pictures and the stories will tell the story of the whole of DOA.

MM: I wanted to ask you about Sudden Death. It was kind of a part time thing for 20 odd years and now it's become a full time thing. With the rise of technology and the advance of the digital, how are things in the independent label market?

Joe: It's pretty tough. I put out an album recently that was catalogue number 888 so we've got albums, singles and all the other stuff and some of it sells pretty well and some of the stuff doesn't sell at all. So basically you've got to find ways to re-brand yourself and get stuff on the net. The vinyl stuff is pretty good but it's expensive to produce. But we're doing okay, it's a struggle to keep going but we're still there and still going.

MM: Now that it's actually out there, how do you feel about the new record now, personally?

Joe: On a personal level I'm really happy with it, we turned it around really fast

MM: So what's next on the horizon for DOA?

Joe: We're gonna start working on another record but one that's very different, but it will still have DOA's core sound.

MM: Anything to add?

Joe: The only thing would just be to effect some positive change...

The debut album by Black Candy Store was released in early 2010. It is the biggest, baddest pure rock record I've heard in ages, and has already secured its place as my choice for Album Of The Year. Black Candy Store hail from a small town in southern France—not exactly a place known for guitar-driven rock 'n' roll—and have the talent to take over the world. Their music bowled me over from the start, and continues to amaze me with each listen. Thanks to Samara Kain at Rock Solid Press, I was able to have a fun and informative e-chat with Arno (vocals) and Julien (guitar), where I learned that we have a lot in common (including a shared love for King's X, the greatest band in the world, and refreshingly compatible views about the world as we know it). Don't let this band pass you by unnoticed, please—life's too short for regrets.

Black Candy Store is represented by Arno = (A) and Julien = (J)

Interview by Tim 'The Impaler' Schwader

Mass Movement: Welcome to Mass Movement! Your record came out of nowhere and knocked me to the ground. Your sound is fresh and different, but also evokes this feeling of comfort as if it's a treasured favorite that I've been listening to all of my life

Black Candy Store (Arno/Julien): Hi, The Impaler, we're glad to be in your magazine! We're speechless... Don't know what to say to respond to this avalanche of compliments! It's very touching, thanks! We wanted to play our own thing without any limitation so we just simply did it!

MM: I want to get into the record and the music more, but first let's knock out some introductions... Can you tell us who's in the band and how you came together?



of Black Candy Store; I write the lyrics and the vocal melodies, Marco plays the bass guitar, and Flo the drums. But we interact a lot together in the process of creation. We've played together for 15 years now. We started the music together and the alchemy between us is working well! We found Marco in Marseille—such a great guy and musician—and we've known Floris for years, but we also discovered a very good drummer.

MM: Another cliché question, I know, but Black Candy Store is an interesting and cool name... what's the story there?

BCS (A): A simple story in fact! I like the Led Zeppelin song 'Candy Store' but the name was a bit too 'pop' for the band because we also like heavy stuff, so we thought about Black Sabbath and the word 'black' stuck with the rest!

MM: As I said, I'm overwhelmed by your record, 'Back To The Wall'. Is this your debut album? If not, how can I get anything (everything!) else you've recorded to date?

BCS (J): This is our first album as composers in this configuration. Don't worry, we've started working on the next release already! We're aiming on launching it next year I guess....

MM: My understanding is that you are a fairly young bunch of guys, too... while your music evokes—to me, at least—traces of Led Zeppelin, Stone Temple Pilots, I Mother Earth, Dishwalla, Dada, Saigon Kick, Nada Surf... Some of these bands are household names while others are completely obscure to most of today's listeners, but all of them take the classic rock template and twist it into something otherworldly. BCS does the same. Tell us about your inspirations for this style, these songs.

BCS (A): The first thing is that we're not so young... I'm 34, Julien is 33. Maybe our pictures are flattering!! My favorite band is still the same after so many years—Led Zeppelin—'cause each time I listen to [them], each year as I grow as a musician, I can hear more clearly the talent they had! Concerning Black Candy Store, our influences are more modern, like Audioslave, Stone Temple Pilots, Soundgarden, King's X, I Mother Earth (I truly like this band, unknown in France!).

BCS (J): Our influences are from the 90's mainly, but with all these years as music listeners we collected a lot of music culture. I've been listening to anything from Pantera stuff to Tori Amos and Lisa Dalbello, from Jimi Hendrix to John Mayer, and so on....

MM: Your musicianship is amazing—the interplay between guitars and vocals, riffs and melodies, rhythms and tempos... and the stellar production adds to the end result. Some of the guitar parts have this gorgeous clean tone that's as lifting as anything Jeff Beck or Slash have ever done, then the riff kicks back in and it's as nasty as Kim Thayil on his best day. Likewise, there are things going on with the drums that make me think I'm listening to 'Physical Graffiti'. I don't even have a question here... I'd just like some insight on your songwriting and recording processes, find out where this is coming from!

BCS (A): Julien brings the riffs and I bring vocal lines and lyrics. Sometimes I begin to work at home to have some melodies, and sometimes we just work together, often in an unplugged way. So we usually start to build the songs like this, then a lot of work at home... rehearsals to hear how it sounds. I'll let Julien finish the answer....

BCS (J): Yes, that's right. I like to write songs in an acoustic, raw way to hear if it works. If it sounds good that way, it's not very difficult to add some arrangements and embellishments to a song. I really dig the process of building a song like that. But sometimes it's all done in an hour, like for 'The Pledge' or 'Back To The Wall' I just record an idea with some drums, bass, and guitar tracks at home, and Arno writes the vocal line and lyrics.

MM: 'Back To The Wall' was produced by Dave Collins, right? There's a big help for any band! Tell us about that. [Collins has worked with Black Sabbath, Soundgarden, QOTSA, Alice Cooper, Reckless Sons, Ben Harper, KMFDM, Danny Elfman, and many more.]

BCS (A): 'Back To The Wall' was mastered by Dave Collins, but we produced the album ourselves—meaning we brought the money [i.e., paid for it] recorded it, and mixed it by ourselves. But Julien contacted Dave Collins to master the album because of his work with all the great bands we love... and he answered yes!

MM: If my friends know one thing about me that is always true, it's that the vocals will make or break any record for me, every time. Arno—what the f*, man?!? Ha ha! When I first got the record and was working on the review, I believe I made a comment about you out-Weilanding Weiland... but that's far from the full story. There are places where I think of him, places where I think of J.R. Richards, places where I think of Edwin... but first and foremost I think 'This cat's got it all!'**

BCS (A): What can I answer to this flood of compliments once more?!? I didn't really know J.R. Richards and Edwin [note: yes he does—Edwin was the original vocalist for I Mother Earth; Richards was the vocalist for Dishwalla, by the way... – The Impaler] but Scott Weiland is an important influence for me with Black Candy Store! This guy really knows how to get the best of a song with simple and brilliant melodies. And what a showman! I was a bit afraid of the reactions of the English-speaking people and for the moment that's OK... better than in France a-h-ha-ha!... there's really a cultural hole in France with big rock or modern rock.

MM: Lyrics, too, are important to me, and your record evokes a wide range of emotional responses from song to song. Is there anything you'd like to share about the lyrics?

BCS (A): Some are easy to understand like 'Swine Seed'. Some are about personal questions, moods, about our way of life... I wrote 'Bittersweet Euphoria' for example when Julien was in a difficult period with this particular state of mind and it inspired me for the song. Sometimes television or books just switch on a light in my mind!

BCS (J): Lyrics are very important to me, too! I don't have this talent of writing lyrics, but I always give hints and ideas to Arno about what I would like to say. I couldn't play something that doesn't fit my way of thinking.

MM: We maybe tackled this a bit on the last question, but there are some political concepts on the record—and I'm specifically referring to the samples regarding genetic modification and patenting. Can you discuss your thoughts on this issue?

BCS (A): According to me it's not about politics at all! The people like Monsanto are trying to patent life! This is not abnormal, this is obscene! Sorry, but people are dying just working hard to feed their families, and the way they want the farmers to manage their work, push them to the abyss...! I could speak about it a long, long time. You can read Vandana Shiva books like '*Ethique et agro-industrie. Main basse sur la vie*'. Sorry, I don't know the English title or the movie about Monsanto!

BCS (J): I know it: 'The World According To Monsanto'. And I also highly recommend 'Food, Inc.' for curious and open-minded people. You can check the zeitgeist movement on the net.

MM: In general, are you political people? Do you want the band to be used as a vehicle for your political views?

BCS (A): As I said, it's not political but about attitudes like speculating about rice or wheat. When you know that you'll drive people to suicide or starvation and to see that nobody is really shocked or surprised, is really intolerable to me. It's just an example, but I could talk about our way of consumption, the idea that happiness is in [having] a bigger TV than the last one or a bigger car just leaves me perplexed! The band is not political, but we feel very concerned about all of this.

BCS (J): I am an apolitical and areligious person. I have strong ideas about how the world is run, but it would be too long to expose this here... I just think politics can't do anything about it! There was, is, and will never be such a thing as democracy! We will always be stuck with the money issue, so the only people who can change the world is us, by being responsible consumers and forcing them to hear our voices! I use my music as my voice and people should do the same with their own means.

MM: Returning to the songs on 'Back To The Wall', do you have personal favorites? If you want to take us through the album song by song, feel free!

BCS (A): OK, my own favorite is 'The Pledge' because of the lyrics and the way it was composed, in 30 minutes, in front of the computer with Julien. It's a powerful, hypnotic song for me! 'Swine seed', 'Wounded', 'Recall'... oh my god, I love my own music! A-ha-ha!!

BCS (J): I love 'em all because it depends on what mood I'm in.

MM: How does BCS fit into the modern music scene in France? What kinds of bands do you play with, both in your home country and elsewhere?

BCS (J): We don't! Our label is German and there was NO French label interested in our music. And to be honest, I prefer it that way 'cause it's one of the reasons why French bands don't export themselves. But that doesn't mean that French people are not interested in this music... Pearl Jam and STP play in front of big crowds here.

BCS (A): It's difficult to play in France with our music, but when we do it, sometimes we play with metal bands, indie bands, pop bands... but it's really rare to hear a band that sounds a bit like us, without any pretension, it's just a cultural question. We played with a death metal band in Tunisia and with a punk rock band in Luxemburg just before an electro thing! So as you can see, we can play anywhere, a-ha-ha!! Come on, promoters!!

MM: Are there any other French acts that you'd like to help expose to the rest of the world? It seems to be pretty hard for a band to break out of France and gain worldwide acceptance. The only French acts that I've been listening to for years (and I love all three) are Treponem Pal, Ivich, and Jasemine. And there probably aren't more than a few hundred other people outside of France who have even heard of these amazing bands, sadly.

we have a bunch of fans over there!

MM: I'm already ready for another album! Do you have any songs written? Any other plans for what comes next?

BCS: We have some material for the next one, yes! Already 10 songs on their way, maybe more... I can't remember... but yes, we're working on it! Concerning what will happen to us next... There's gonna be a music video of the track 'Someday' soon [note: the video can now be viewed at myspace.com/blackcandystore, or search YouTube – The Impaler] and we want to play as much as we can! For the moment we're happy with the music, and it'll honestly be wonderful to share it on stage with people outside of France!

MM: What about UFOs? Any alien encounters to share with our readers? If not, got any good conspiracy theories or bawdy tales that would be embarrassing to tell in front of your parents?

BCS (A): The only alien I've met was Nuno Bettencourt and Extreme in Paris!! This guy is amazing on a guitar. About conspiracy theories, Julien is the specialist! Concerning the bawdy tales, I'll tell you about it when we have a beer together, a-ha-ha!

BCS (J): I'm gonna fold on this one 'cause it's difficult enough for the band to work out, LOL!! It's very personal, and I've noticed that people are afraid to know what's really going on... I can give a link that will give hours of thinking to people if you want: truworlDhistory.info [note: this is an ex-



BCS (A): We like a band called FFF that is, unfortunately, separated, but we met some great guys and musicians, like Bukowski in Paris, and Atomic Garden [who play] in a different indie style but are really cool guys!

BCS (J): But the thing is the same for them: it's difficult to play in good conditions 'cause promoters don't book this kind of music.

MM: What are your plans for promoting the album? Any tours outside of France coming up?

BCS (A): We're working with the label to promote it in 8 countries for the moment, with interviews, reviews, radio... and we're preparing a European tour that will begin with the UK, I think in November, then France, Germany, Belgium... for the moment.

BCS (J): Man, I want to reach the U.S. one day to meet people there.... And

tremely worthwhile website to visit – The Impaler]. Let's just say that I question everything, even if it's not convenient, and I'm always open to alternative ideas.

MM: It's a genuine honor and a true pleasure to have BCS in Mass Movement. Thanks for your time. Now the floor is yours—last words, random thoughts, shameless promotion, whatever you've got....

BCS: It was an honor to be with you and to be reviewed so kindly in Mass Movement! My last word: keep your mind clear and open, and come to see us when you can. We love to meet people... that's the best part of this job!

MM: One last thing: Don't break up. Ever!

BCS: No plans for that in the horizon! Thank you, Tim, and take care.

Following a successful UK tour with the Dropkick Murphys, Face to Face are back and sounding better than ever. Their currently on verge of touring across America and Canada on this years Vans warped tour, Singer of the band Trever Keith took some time out of his hectic schedule to speak to me...

Interview by Fletch

MM: Firstly, Hi Trever thanks for taking the time to speak to Mass Movement today. How are you and the guys doing?

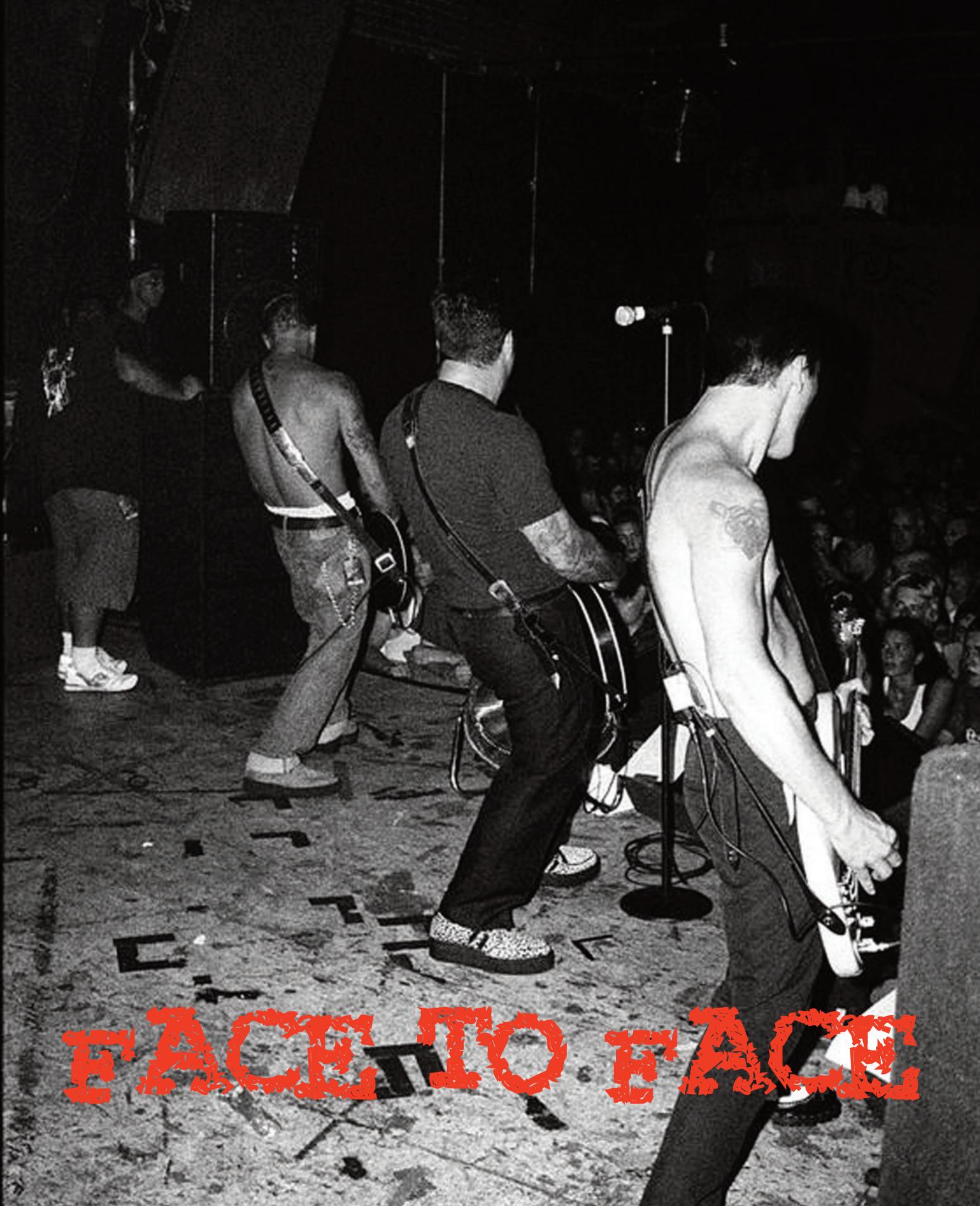
Trever: Very well. It was great to be back in the UK.

MM: What made you guys want to reform and take Face to Face back on the road?

Trever: After about 4+ years. I really started to miss it. I called Scott one day and he was all too willing to put it back together.

MM: Tell us about your current UK tour, have you enjoyed being back over here?

Trever: The crowds have been awesome. It's been a while and we never really traditionally spent too much time in the UK so there is a bit of re-educat-



tion going on. But I felt like most nights, by the time our set was finished, we had new fans and we had reclaimed our old ones.

MM: What's your most memorable tour story?

Trever: I think the Icelandic volcano pretty much took the prize on this one. A once in 100-200 year event just so happens to occur during our tour, who knew? It was a constant source of stress and worry that we may not be able to get back home.

MM: How does life in Face to Face differ nowadays, compared to 10 years ago?

Trever: I think we are all a lot more comfortable with ourselves in the group. There isn't this constant feeling of competition and struggle to become successful. We're happy with who we are and what we have achieved thus far. It is very liberating. We are truly doing it for the love.

MM: What's a typical day on tour like for Face to Face?

Trever: Travel to venue, load in, find coffee, sound check, find food, play show, drink copious amounts of alcohol, repeat.

MM: We're fast approaching the 20th anniversary of the release of 'Don't turn away', how does it feel knowing that many consider this record as one of the most influential punk/rock records of the 90's?

Trever: It's hard to really know what that means. I feel honoured that people have been influenced positively by the record.

MM: Back in the early days of Face to Face, Can you recall the moment you knew the band was destined to go places?

Trever: Not really. I think I always had a confidence about our success but it was never really defined. It certainly felt great to have labels interested and of course the first time we heard our songs on the radio it felt like something big was happening. But it is a journey and a long one and I don't think it is the same for any two bands. I'd still like to achieve more success I suppose. I am a bit of an overachiever.

MM: You've done a fair bit of production work over the years. Is there any band or artist that you would really like to work with?

Trever: Plenty. Probably too many to mention. I like a lot of British bands. I've really been interested in The King Blues lately. I also like British Sea Power and The Horrors to name a few.

MM: Face to Face's song 'Disconnected' has just appeared on the new guitar hero 5 game, how did that come about and more importantly, how are your guitar hero skills?

Trever: I suck at Guitar Hero, but I love being in the game. It came about just by a publisher calling me who had interest in placing the song. I am thrilled at the opportunity and I'd love to do more with GH in the future like



DLC for new and old songs, etc.

MM: The bassist of Face to Face, Scott Shiflett is brother to Chris from the Foo Fighters. Would you like to tour with them guys if they asked you?

Trever: Duh, who wouldn't want to be on a massive tour like that.

MM: You released a solo record, Melancholics Anonymous. Tell us a little about that and how the whole process varied from Face to Face.

Trever: It's the first record I wrote and recorded completely on my own. My buddy Chad Blinman recorded my vox and some drums, but I did everything else. Face to Face is always at least a duo partnership if not a whole band effort so it was pretty different. A lot of self doubt can creep in to a project like that. It's tough to get out of your own head sometimes. I am very proud of it now though.

MM: Have you considered touring your solo material over here in the UK?

Trever: Absolutely, for now I'm a bit busy with F2F though

MM: Looking back through your back catalogue of work, what's your favourite song you've written and why?

Trever: Heart of Hearts. Don't really know why, I feel a greater connection to that song than any other.

MM: Can you tell us anything about what we can expect from the new Face to Face record?

Trever: Sheer magic

MM: I'm sure it's a pretty exciting prospect to have Chad Yaro back for this record, would you agree?

Trever: Yeah he's OK. We'll see if we can get some decent performances out of him.

MM: What music are you currently listening to at the moment?

Trever: Right at this moment I'm listening to Depeche Mode "Enjoy the Silence"

MM: What's your favourite movie at the present time?

Trever: There will be Blood

MM: Who would you prefer to be stuck on a bus with, Robert Smith or Morrissey? And why?

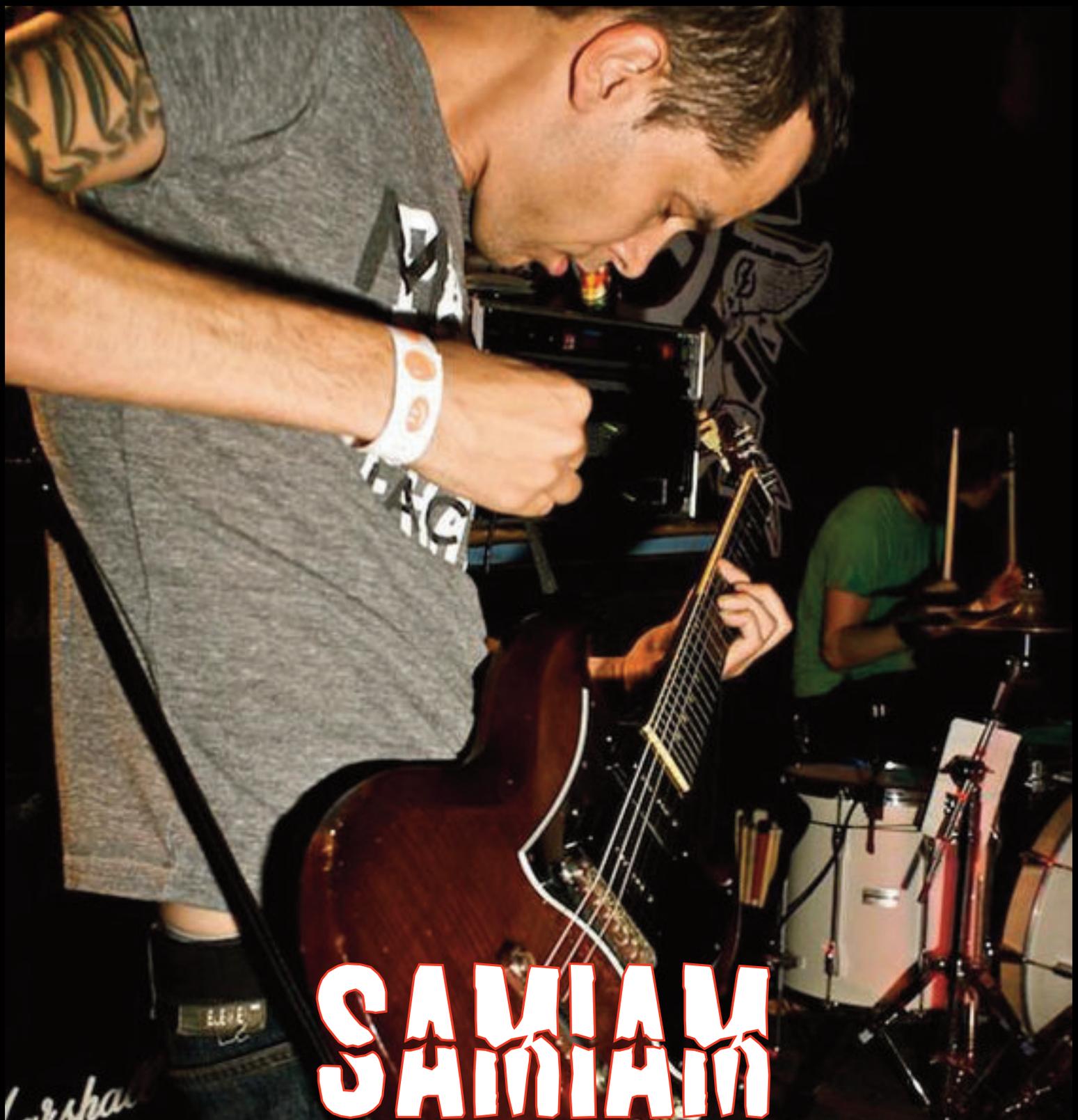
Trever: Morrissey, because he hasn't become as pathetic in his old age as Robert Smith has.

MM: If you had to explain yourself in one word, what would it be?

Trever: Bastard

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IT RUINED MY LIFE...



SAMIAM SHIMIAM

I'm going to answer this probably too honestly....and I don't want to advocate drug use in anyway...in fact I have to say that you'd have to put a gun to my head to have me do it again...but one pivotal event when I was growing up was doing acid.

My twin brother and I are first generation Americans....our mother is from Argentina and dad from China (although she was Austrian and he is Russian...long story there). we grew up in Berkeley, California, which is very multicultural and full of alternative lifestyles and whatever, but we were very sheltered. And our thing was that we wanted to fit in...not express ourselves. When our parents wanted to teach us Russian or German or Spanish for example, we were little brats. "Fuck that, we are Americans we speak English". I'd say because of our insecurities and habit of watching too much TV, we were destined to be very typical 'mericans. Conventional, boring. I probably would like Hollywood blockbusters and fast food, ha. But, uh, yeah...without going into a long winded story about the few occasions that I dropped acid....which is like deliberately turning on the switch... or illuminating how

weird and unexplainable the world is....lets just say I never looked at the world the same. And I definitely saw a divide in people out there...there are people that look at life at face value, only concerning themselves with the material world...Jobs, cars, stuff, petty shit. Then there are other people that recognize that stuff...but also think about the world around them and maybe what is really important and substantial in life.

OK, now I sound like a drippy hippy or new-age dork. I fail. ha. And I have to say, a person doesn't have to take acid to enlighten themselves...of course they don't...but in my life, that is full of big mistakes and questionable paths....that is when I took a step to growing into the person I ended up being. For better or worse. **Sergei**

Photo by Tyler Nutter

Chances are, if you read comics or play RPG's, that you've come across Guy Davis' work, and if you have, one things for sure. You'll never forget it. As he's currently working on Dark Horse's BPRD (one of the BEST books on the market at the moment), I figured it was time that we caught up with the man to chat about life, comics, the Universe and everything in between... Interview by Tim Mass Movement

GUY DAVIS

MM: How, when and where did you first become aware of, and interested in comics, and what do you think has helped maintain and fuel your lifelong (so far that is...) love of the medium? What, in your opinion, separates and differentiates comics from every

other form of both literature and art?

Guy: I didn't read a lot of comics growing up, only a few based on TV shows I watched like Space:1999, Star Trek and Lost in Space. But I was drawing all the time, and drawing things sequentially just not really doing it as comics. I would draw these monster fight scenes or stories as a kid, one drawing per sheet of typewriting paper just for fun~ which is probably what got me first liking the idea of doing comics and telling stories sequentially. And that's pretty much what sets it off from other artwork to me, I just enjoy telling a story sequentially.

MM: Did you always want to be an artist, or did you want to be something else when you were growing up? Did you always want to work in comics and as a comic book artist?

Guy: Growing up I think I wanted to be anything but an artist when I was a kid, you know the usual dreams of either being an astronaut or race-car driver. But in my teens I started thinking about an art career, but I was dreaming of doing conceptual movie design or storyboarding. Once I graduated I pretty much feel into doing comics when I did a strip for a local fanzine before that fanzine became a small press publisher (Arrow Comics) in the mid '80s.

MM: You're self taught aren't you? Do you think the ability to create and illustrate, from an artists point of view, can really be taught, or do you think that it's an ability that you either have or don't? Why? What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of being self-taught, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of studying illustration at art school?

Guy: I can only go by what I've done being self-taught~ when I was starting out there wasn't really any college programs or schools based around comics aside from a couple that seemed geared to the main-stream. And really, comics is the one thing where I think a degree doesn't mean much at all, it's what you're actually showing on the page that matters. To me the main thing any artist needs is an imagination, and that's something that I don't think can be taught. Technical skill and refinement can, but if you don't have the imagination to do something different with all the skills you learn~ then you'll fall flat. I think it really just boils down to the individual artist and what they take and learn from any sort of education whether it's from a school or being self taught. But looking back I don't wish I had gone to any sort of art school. (laughs) Others might think I should have though.

MM: Who, or what originally influenced your artwork, and do the same things still influence you? How, if at all, do you think your influences manifest themselves in your illustration?

Guy: Originally I was really influenced by animation more than any comics, when I discovered Japanese animation in the 80s that really influenced my artwork with the first book I did, "The Realm"~ and you can see a bit of it in the early issues of Baker Street. But around the time of Baker Street I discovered a lot of European artists like Jacques Tardi, Loisel and Schuiten and that probably influenced the direction of my current style more than anything.

MM: How did you get your break in comics? It's a notoriously difficult field to break into and a hard road to travel. How did you do it? Was there a moment when you thought, "I've done it, I'm finally there, I'm part of the comic book industry", and if so, can you tell us about it?

Guy: I broke in 25 years ago with some small press publishers right before the big black and white comic glut of the 80's~ where everyone thought the next indie comic would be a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles blockbuster (which pretty much every other book wasn't). Basically it was a mix of luck and constant work that kept me drawing all these years. One deadline and book lead to another and each project gave me experience and led to more work for a new company. Matt Wagner was a fan of my creator owned series

Baker Street and that lead to working with him at Vertigo on Sandman Mystery Theatre. I don't know if I ever had one of those, "I made it moments"~ I think I'm trying to focus on the work at hand and what's coming up next But I tell people if you want to do comics, then start drawing them~ not just pinups and figure drawings but start doing the storytelling. self publish, get the work and stories out there anyway you can instead of waiting for "big publishers" to find you.

MM: I wanted to ask you about 'Baker Street', your first creator owned series...Were and are you a fan of Sherlock Holmes and alternative history, and if so, what do you find appealing about both? Why did you choose to use punks as the central characters for the

series...? Have you ever thought about maybe returning to Baker Street one day?

Guy: Oh yeah, still a big fan of the Holmes stories~ I was really into punk when I started doing the series and wanted to do a book that had to do with punk and also had a strong female lead character. The alternate history was a throwaway setting idea for me to make the Baker Street world seem not too dated~ but Gary Reed who co-created the series with me really loved the alternate history idea and worked up that angle a lot more with the setting. Hopefully one day I'll get back to finishing up the series, maybe after I finish up the Marquis. Baker Street had a set ending planned but I got sidetracked from continuing it when I started work on Sandman Mystery Theatre.

MM: One thing that I did notice and was intrigued by, is that you've been quite involved with White Wolf Games as an illustrator – how does working for an RPG based company differ from working for a comic publisher, if at all? How did you originally start working with White Wolf? Are you a gamer yourself, or have you thought about becoming one since working with White Wolf?

Guy: I actually met my original White Wolf editor, Larry Snelly at a con that the company had set up at. I thought it would be fun to do some spot illo and design work on the side and he was familiar with my comicwork and that led to about 7 years worth of illo work for them on books like Vampire the Masquerade, Mage, Werewolf and some other spin-offs like Adventure and Abberant. One of the things I wanted to do with the spot illos for them was not treat it like a pinup~ I wanted each drawing to seem like it was part of a larger story, like taking one panel out of a comic book page. So hopefully that drawing would make the viewer imagine what came before and what would happen after. And they liked that idea. I've never actually played any of the White Wolf games to be honest, I had to skim through a lot of rule book text for snippets to illustrate.

MM: Having also worked for both DC and Marvel, both of whom are seen as being the bastions of Superhero's, and I was kind of curious, about which of the projects that you worked on for both was your personal favourite and why? Most comic folks are either DC or Marvel guys, so Guy, which are you, DC or Marvel? Why?

Guy: I'm a Dark Horse guy, not being into superheroes I really don't have an affinity to either DC or Marvel. There's nothing wrong with the superhero genre, just nothing I ever took to. But as far as projects I've done for both Marvel or DC, I would pick the pulp / crime noir Sandman Mystery Theatre series I did for Vertigo with Matt Wagner and Steven Seagle as one of my favorites.

MM: Like, I guess, a lot of people, I first became aware of your work via the B.P.R.D and Hellboy, and I was kinda curious as to how you first became involved with both, how you met up with Mike Mignola and started illustrating the BPRD? As BPRD is Mike Mignola's baby, I was also curious about how much free reign as an artist and illustrator you have when it comes to the title, and how the design process works for the book? Having illustrated a number of different BPRD arcs, which is your favourite in terms of the design and artwork, and why is it thus?

Guy: I met Mike years ago at a convention and stayed in touch with him at shows and over the phone. Mike was wanting to spin-off BPRD from Hellboy and I was definitely wanting to draw it, so I first did the one-shot "Dark Waters" before moving onto the Plague of Frogs mini-series Mike wrote. Mike definitely gives me a lot of freedom to draw the book as I would draw it~ he never wanted me to ape his style or anything. Design wise, everything I design for the book~ monsters or settings, those all go by Mike and a lot of times we'll send sketches back and forth to finalize the design. And that's always great fun, Mike's got one of the best imaginations you'll ever find and he always has ideas to make the final design just perfect! All the arcs have



been great fun, but if I had to pick a favorite I think it would still be Garden of Souls~ probably just because of all the crazy designs we did for the Victorian Cyborgs and the setting. And of course the great story that John Arcudi and Mike came up with.

MM: I have to know...How did you end up working for Metal Hurlant, and where did the idea for your regular series (along with Jerry Frissen), "The Zombies That Ate The World" come from?

Guy: I wish I had better stories how these things came about~ but pretty much Humanoides called and asked if I was interested in drawing the first Zombies story for Metal Hurlant. At the time I thought it was going to be just a one-off short story, but they liked it and then it became a serial before moving off to it's own album published in France. Jerry came up with the idea and series, I came up with the character designs and look for it~ I remember at first they wanted to make it look more realistic, or as realistic as I normally draw things like BPRD or the Marquis. But I really wanted to get more cartoony with it otherwise I think the dark humor would come off pretty dry. But I had a lot of fun working on it~ Jerry's great and got a sick sense of humor, just what the book needs!

MM: Again, hate to put you on the spot Guy, but can you tell all the boys and girls out in MM land all about , another of your creator owned series, The Marquis? Is there going to be a follow up to 'Inferno', and if so, what can you tell us about it?

Guy: (laughs) I got to send you some comps before you start asking questions! The Marquis is my second creator owned series after Baker Street, the Marquis actually first saw print as a one shot back in '97 but got pushed back while I worked on Sandman Mystery Theatre. Basically, the Marquis is my action/horror series about a 18th century devil hunter in a fictional French world who believes he's been blessed with the ability to hunt down the escaped souls of Hell~ or he's killing innocent townspeople, or maybe it's all something worse. Dark Horse collected everything that's seen print so far, the first series "Danse Macabre" and the shorter Intermezzo stories into the new Inferno collection which is now in it's second printing. The plan is to finish up the series as original graphic novels every couple years in-between work on BPRD~ the next book will be The Marquis and the Midwife that's slated for 2011, with 2 more books after that which will tell the whole story of the Marquis.

MM: Which do you prefer – working on already established titles, or working on your own, creator owned properties? I interviewed Mark Millar a while ago, and he stated that he thought the future of the comics industry lay with creator owned properties and titles, partly because of the incentives for the artists and writers, but also because of the freedom said properties gave them as far as the work is concerned...I was wondering how you felt about Creator Owned properties? Are they, in your opinion, the future of the industry, or not? Why?

Guy: I'm lucky that I'm getting to do both with BPRD and The Marquis, it's a nice balance to have with just getting to draw some great stories that Mike and John write but also having the total self-expression of doing what I want with The Marquis. I don't think I'd be happy with one if I didn't have the other~ and even though BPRD is definitely Mike's book, it doesn't have the same feel as working on a company owned book that's passed through tons of hands over the years.

MM: You've also recently worked on Judge Dredd for 2000 AD, which is kind of odd as most artists work on 2000 AD and then work for the US companies, yet you've done things the other way around....Were and are you fan of Tharg's favourite son and was Dredd a character that you always wanted to get your hands on, and if so, what was it like to finally illustrate Mega-City One's most feared lawman?

Guy: Dredd was one of those characters I read early on when I was starting out~ the local comic shop would get in those 2000AD's, the cool newsprint ones and some Titan collections of Dredd stories. So he was a character that I always thought would be fun to draw~ and I think all artists have a wish list of characters they want to draw at some point in their careers. And I wasn't disappointed when I got to do the OUTLAW short story that Rob Williams wrote~ it was a lot of fun, even though that helmet was a pain in the ass to wrap my head around when I had to draw it.

MM: I guess we're slowly winding down now Guy...So what does the future hold for you? Can you tell us what you're working on and what projects you've got lined up?

Guy: More BPRD, they have me working ahead on the next series after King of Fear called BPRD: Hell on Earth. One of the reasons I'm working ahead is so I can jump over onto a new Lobster Johnson mini-series that Mike and John are writing. And also working away on the new Marquis graphic novel with some smaller things popping up here and there~ so it's busy, but you won't catch me complaining. I'm having a great time!

LAIR OF THE MINOTAUR

Lair of the Minotaur are a HEAVY FUCKING METAL band from Chicago and their latest blistering album *Evil Power* sees the light of day on their own label The Grindhouse, distributed by cult American metal label Southern Lord. To celebrate this killer release and the mega gruesome video which accompanies it, I caught up with guitarist and singer Steven Rathbone via email. He talks about gore, Greek mythology and of course, heavy metal, what more could you want?...

Interview by Lauren Barley

MM: It is really refreshing to hear a straight up, raw heavy metal album with definite nods to bands like Celtic Frost, Maiden and Entombed whilst also being forward thinking, creative and playful. How would you

Steven: I wanted *EVIL POWER* to be a soundtrack for drunk driving. A total rager. An album you can put on, and listen to the whole thing. It was inspired by Judas Priest, Motorhead, Obituary, The Misfits, "Kill em All" and S.O.D. A "fist in the air" kind of record. No filler.

MM: Do you have a personal preference between the two records?

Steven: *EVIL POWER* is definitely my favourite of our albums so far. Happy with the songs, the performance, recording, etc. All of the above. But that's just my opinion.

MM: Sanford Parker and Scott Hull worked with you again on this album. What is it about those guys that makes them such a perfect fit for



describe your band vision?

Steven: The mission statement is to make HEAVY FUCKING METAL. There are a lot of trends and subgenre's that will come and go. But raw, kick ass metal will always have an audience. The band was born out of a void in the metal "scene". I wasn't hearing the kind of metal I wanted to hear, so I started recording demo's with a drum machine. And would just listen to them in my car. I let a friend hear them and he suggested I start a band using those songs. They ended up being the songs on our first album, *Carnage*.

MM: As with your previous album *War Metal Battle Master*, *Evil Power* continues the concept of Ares the God Of War. Where did this concept stem from? Are you interested in any specific mythology?

Steven: There are writings that describe Ares not as a man or a God, but a state of mind. A spirit, like a voice in your head. That intrigued me and I went with it. The lyrics are a mixture of classic Greeky mythology and shit that I make up. I sometimes will use the characters and just make up my own stories. But the lyrics retains that duality, Ares can be a God, a man or the little devil on your shoulder. But I originally got interested in Greek mythology by playing *Dungeons and Dragons*. And watching movies like *Jason and the Argonauts* & *Clash of the Titans*. That led me to *The Aeneid* and *Homer*. Greek myths are great fodder for metal lyrics. Filled with blood, monsters, sex and war.

MM: As you said, "War Metal Battle Master was the war, *Evil Power* is the party after the bloody victory". I definitely think that *Evil Power* has more of a celebratory tone in the raw anthemic riffs, stomping drums and more fully charged choruses particularly on the title track and 'Let's Kill These Motherfuckers'. How would you say you have developed the concept musically?

Lair Of The Minotaur?

Steven: So far, all of our releases recording and mastering have been handled by those guys (except I mastered *Carnage*, the first album). Sanford is super easy to work with. He knows what we're trying to do. We don't use triggers or tricks. We want it to sound raw. He's got a great ear for metal, and all about loud guitars. Scott is an old friend. Met him way back in '95 when *7000 Dying Rats* was touring with *Anal Cunt*, before he joined the band. He's a great at making our stuff loud and listenable at the same time.

MM: Speaking of co-conspirators, some of our readers will be interested to know that *General Diabolical Slaughter* (Dave Piekarz) former member of *Usurper* guests on the album. Can you tell us a little more about that collaboration?

Steven: He's a bro of mine. He was actually supposed to do some back up vocals on *War Metal Battle Master*, but we had some scheduling conflicts. This time it worked out. He does back ups on like 4 or 5 of the songs on *Evil Power*. Dave (the General), has one of the best death yells out there. Totally stoked to have him be a part of the record.

MM: *Evil Power* is officially coming out on your own label *Grindhouse-Records* with *Southern Lord* doing the distribution. When did the label form? What was your motivation in starting the label?

Steven: It's something we always wanted to do. The label is a partner company to my day job, running *The Grind-House.com* (). We sell movie posters and t-shirts. And we host horror film fests here in Chicago. When our contract was up with *Southern Lord*, we approached Greg Anderson about the idea of us releasing this album independently. He was totally into it and offered to distribute for us. We have had a great experience at *Southern Lord*, and have total respect for them. But it has become easier for a band to take

the bull by the horns, as they say. And release their albums on their own. It's been nice to have a more hands on approach with this release.

MM: Where do you aspire to take the label from here?

Steven: There are a few projects we have in mind. I'd like to release some old movie soundtracks. Hard to find stuff that is out of print, or was never released on cd. That was the original intention of the label actually. Waiting to see how this release goes first though.

MM: It is so great that you decided to make a video for the title track of the new album, particularly after the raptuous response the first video received, I didn't think it could get much more savage, how wrong I was. With Horror film special effects whizz Ryan Oliver in the directors chair, tell us more about how you work together? Who came up with the concepts?

Steven: When we finished the War Metal Battle Master video, Ryan told me that he wanted to direct the next video. And we'd blow away the last one. So when it came time for the next album. I approached him with the treatment. Luckily, we stumbled upon the awesome minotaur mask you see in the video. It's a custom made taxidermied Spanish bull's head mask. Once we had the mask, we had to make the video. Ryan came up with the slave's being chained by the neck and pulled under the throne. That was pretty demented. He built those mountains that you see in the beginning and credit shots too. The artistic integrity of this video is way over the top. Super happy with how it came out.

MM: Please indulge a fellow horror and gore geek for a brief moment and tell me some of your most favourite films of the horror genre...

Steven: I'll just throw a few out there: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Return

of the Living Dead, Island of Death, Cannibal Ferox, Martyrs, Inside, Sleep-away Camp, Pieces, Last House on Dead End Street, Opera, When A Stranger Calls, The Thing and August Underground's Mordum.

MM: Considering the concepts behind the last two albums, the artwork that accompanies them and the videos that you have created, to say that there is a definite visual element to the band is something of an understatement. Have you considered creating soundtracks for film or better still co-producing a film and writing the soundtrack?

Steven: Yeah, I've made original music for stage productions, art installations, TV commercials, some low budget films. I'd love to produce a film and write the soundtrack. If I had the financing I'd be all about it. And time, way too busy with my business and the band right now. But it's definitely something on the "to do" list. Sound is so important to the mood in a horror film. I have respect for directors that also create the soundtrack (John Carpenter, Steve Miner), and for crafting a film with a more cohesive vision.

MM: Finally and to repeat an earlier statement, "if War Metal Battle Master Was The War, and Evil Power the party after the bloody victory" then what will become of Ares, God of War, the absolute badass next?...

Steven: These are the salad days for Ares. War is widespread. Evil fills men's hearts. When the Gods start taking an active part in the war of the mortals, Athena turns on Ares. He ends up being imprisoned and then eventually breaks free, returning to Olympus to battle the Gods. But that's the next album!

Check out the fantastic x-rated videos for Evil Power and War Metal Battle





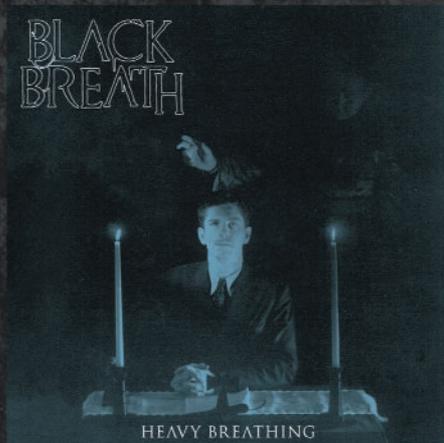
BXI (Boris w/ Ian Astbury) CD

Southern Lord proudly announces an incredible collaboration between label artists Boris and Ian Astbury. This finely-crafted four-song release, simply entitled BXI, was tracked and mixed in Tokyo in late April. Astburys' iconic rock vocals are a perfect match for Boris's straightforward, laid-back, but still raw and imaginative songwriting constructed for the EP; another intriguing display within the band's ever-morphing, extensive résumé of releases, tours and collaborations.



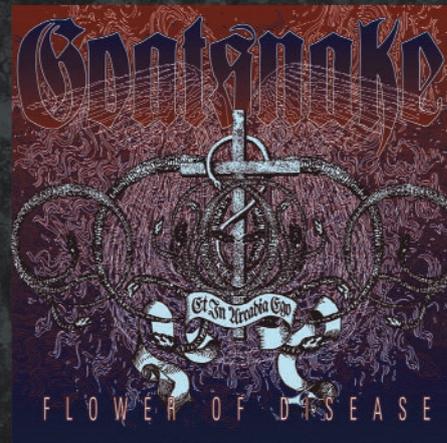
Masakari - The Prophet Feeds CD

A devastating blend of d-beat crust and anxious hardcore descendant to His Hero Is Gone and From Ashes Rise, as well as more punk/crust founders G.I.S.M. and Discharge. Crushing, discordant riffing smashes its way through the barrage of ravenous drum battery, broken, eerie guitar leads entangled in the song structures, and all fueled by guttural, searing vocals that power the angry, socio-politically inspired lyrics.



Black Breath - Heavy Breathing CD

Behold the debut recordings of Seattle's new lords of destruction: Black Breath! A extremely raw and uncompromising blend of angry hardcore and ripping metal, inspired by a steady intake of Discharge, Poison Idea, Celtic Frost and Bathory. Available on 180 gram vinyl and compact disc.



Goatsnake - Flower of Disease CD

Reissue of the long out of print Flower of Disease album from heavy doom/blues legend: Goatsnake. This is essential listening for fiends of heavy music with a sinister swing. The heaviness of doom, the swing of soul and the dark cry of the blues.

coming soon:

The Secret-"Solve Et Coagula" CD +LP
Earth- A Bureaucratic Desire For Extra Capsular Extractions" CD+2xLP
Corrosion of Conformity III- "Your Tomorrow" 7"
Righteous Fool-7"

SOUTHERN LORD

www.southernlord.com

Ché Snelting left Dutch metalcore powerhouse Born From Pain a few years ago. He just needed to step away from it all. No-one could have foreseen, quite possibly not even Ché, that he'd become the singer in Arma Gathas. A new band, given life by both Ché and Cataract guitarist Simon. 'Dead To This World', their debut on Metal Blade shows just how fertile these guys have bene so far, and Ché just wants to get the battle hymns of Arma Gathas out to our dying generation, before it's too late....

Interview by Martijn Welzen

Photo's by Cindy Frey

MM: Having consulted Google, I still couldn't find out what the name of your band means...

Che: We deliberately chose an uncommon name. A name with a deeper meaning, but also a name that wouldn't directly let you know what sort of a band we are... besides being a heavy band of course. We already had a few other names and had even made logos to see if they would fit us. In short, Arma Gathas means to collectively sing war anthems. That's also the way you have to see the songs, that ism that they're sung together. A band who are trying to carry out a certain vision together and attack today's morality. It's about our almost inhuman strive for luxury and power. A drive that is so strong we often forget, or even worse ignore, what life really is about. As always this is at the expense of others, and has severe ramifications for the world as we know it. I'm not pretending I have the answers, but I do, repeatedly, ask myself critical questions about the quality of life. And I've decided to only be a part of this to a certain extent. **That** is what Arma Gathas stands for, and what it means to me.

MM: So, a new band, and a new album. I really thought that after you left Born From Pain, you would never want to climb the stage anymore...

Che: Funny you should mention that. It's no secret that, even when I was with BFP, I didn't really feel like touring anymore. I was simply fed up with it. I ended up feeling like an outsider within my own band for quite a long time. I belonged with a group, which wasn't a part of me anymore. Being on tour, I always wanted to be somewhere else and in the end it didn't give me the satisfaction it once gave me. I had already, at a young age, and this might sound a bit exaggerated to the readers, fulfilled my dreams. For me it wasn't really a challenge anymore, and I ended going through the same cycle again and again. The step to the next level of bigger venues and audiences just couldn't be achieved and to keep on going on that same level, pushing my future further away, wasn't something I believed in anymore. I really felt relieved when I told the guys I couldn't keep on going. I quit and never looked back and for two years I kept a low-profile. I went to shows occasionally and bought a few CD's every now and then, but during that time, I was just an average consumer. Over a year ago Simon contacted me to ask how things were going and to see if I would be interested in a project that we'd been talking about when we met at different concerts. Funny thing was, that it all happend at the same time I wanted to do something creative again. It was however, all based on one important condition, I wanted it to be exactly the way I wanted it, and that was also Simon's condition. We always had this personal bond, now it was about the music. After I heard two songs ('The Rise & Fall' and 'The Damage Done'), I immediately started writing and there seemed to be an endless stream of material. What pulled me in, definitively, was wor-

king with Simon, the music, the conditions we set and the creative process we never wanted to limit in any way. Now we're another year down the road, with a record-deal, a new cd and shows we can choose from. This is another dream come true, for all of us.

MM: Was it Simon who stepped up to the plate when it came to getting the other band members involved?

Che: That wasn't really too much hassle. Marc was contacted by Simon. Marc also plays with Machine Made God and knew Simon. He wanted to do something simpler, without too many technical bits. That was exactly the direction we wanted to go in with Arma Gathas. He was very enthusiastic, and we hit it off perfectly. And only a few people know that Marc's literally a genius when it comes to equipment. I approached Max, our drummer. We tried getting a drummer with a different approach to things. Not your typical from the 'scene' kind of person or a typical metal drummer. We did look for someone who had a good technique, endurance, who could hit the drums hard and able to think outside the box. He was playing with a band I frequently saw, and I noticed his tight, somewhat peculiar style. Besides, he's a very funny guy. The biggest problem we had, was finding a bass player. Wouter (former drummer BFP), played bass in a couple of rehearsals, but couldn't continue due to his job. Eventually we stumbled across Alex, following a few try-outs. He fits the band very well.

MM: And how are thing working out with Arma Gathas being a Dutch / German band? Can't always be easy working things like rehearsal etc.

Che: It has it's pro's and con's... The logistical side of things can be a terrible nightmare. How to plan a reheasal or a show is a real challenge. However, because we don't really rehearse too much together, the vibe within the band is great. And when it is time for practice, we're locked away from dusk till dawn. We're always constructing something. During my time with Born From Pain I really came to dislike band practice. There's one other thing, which is different now, and that's the sense of humor. I can be harsh and sarcastic in the way I express myself and some people really have to get used to it, which sort of makes it fun for everyone. I have to say, Germans seem to have a few difficulties with it.

MM: Was it a natural choice for you, signing with Metal Blade, after having been on the label with both Cataract and Born From Pain?

Che: Quite early in the bands existance, there was quite a lot of interest from labels. However, we didn't want to promise anything to anyone. As with all other aspects of the band, we wanted to have freedom, and a professional approach with, and from, any label we worked with. With BFP we had a good working relationship with Metal Blade. The same goes for Machine Made God and Cataract. It made it an easier decision, but it definitely wasn't a logical one. Metal Blade had shown an interest, and although they weren't the biggest label, they did give us this feeling of belonging. We also wanted to be judged on the end result, so we went out looking for a label after we finished recording. With a network as big as ours, it was quite easy finding the right people. And as Simon also works with Metal Blade, things have become more DIY. For this album we did everything on our own, or within the network we've built up over the years. The fact we have achieved everything with friends makes it even more special.



MM: What struck me most when comparing the new band to the other bands you played in is the groove, you guys have, which is not not unlike Machine Head...

Che: We didn't want to limit ourselves musically. We still don't want that. With our old bands we were pigeonholed and had picked up labels we could never really shake. We didn't want that to happen again. We just went and did what we like and that's dealing out a few punches and having a groove... that was our main goal. Machine Head is, of course, a prime example. The band with that ideal combination of a groove and a blow to the head. I'm a huge fan, and have been ever since they released 'Burn My Eyes' so for me any comparison to them is nothing short of a huge compliment. Other bands that were very important to us... Integrity, for their gloomy outlook on things. Neurosis and Bolt Thrower for the way they do everything, both DIY, but very professional.

MM: Besides the common metal instruments, guitar-drums-bass you also use a keyboard at times. It's giving this particular set of songs a very dark feel. Seems like you don't have high hopes for mankind....

Che: As far as we're concerned, any instrument is allowed as long as it adds something to the music and the story we want to tell. We just wanted to have everything right for this record; sound, title, band name, song titles, layout etc etc. It was just amazing hearing all these songs when they were finally done.



We did feel though, that some songs needed more power, which we enhanced by using keyboards and other instruments. I almost entirely re-wrote one of the songs in the studio. The euphoria I felt at the time was something I just didn't want to let go. Pure adrenaline!

MM: How different is it for you, singing your own lyrics now? You didn't write lyrics when you were in BFP right?

Che: During my time with Born From Pain I didn't write any of the lyrics, nor did I interfere with song structures. I was simply singing someone else's words. It just became a habit, even though I was actually writing quite a lot. For some reason BFP wasn't the band I could pour my entire soul into. It was just easier singing words that weren't my own. It's much easier singing my own words. I'm happy and pleased with my roles as both writer and singer. I understand the words better, especially as far as emotions are concerned. I wrote them, they came from my creativity. I never have to ask anyone why a sentence is specifically at that place in that song. For this album I dove into conspiracy theories and the Mayan's view of the end of the world. A door to a whole new world opened up to me. I've tried keeping things understandable and to the point and I tried telling the story from today to the imminent end of the world. That story and the concept were very important. In principal, it was the idea for a novel I've been thinking about, and which I might just write someday. The inspiration for that hasn't come to me yet.

MM: Diving into your lyrics a little more, its titles like 'Generation Doom' and 'Losing Hope' which stand out...

Che: A few decades ago people use to call the youth of that time, 'Generation X'. I wanted to take that a step further. The last generation, a lost generation, a generation doomed to die, without actually knowing it. I am not a clairvoyant, so can't see what the future will bring, but I still think we're on our way to the end of times. If we take the beginning of the industrial revolution as a

start and see where it has brought us, the only conclusion that you can reach is that it's all gone mad. It's not about survival, it's about who has the biggest TV and the most expensive car. It's about oil, about money and power. Just today I heard that in Germany alone, about 2.5 million children are poor, measured by today's standards. And the next thing I see is my neighbour parking his Jaguar in front of his house and his Audi A4 in his garage. What are we talking about? Where are we heading? If a party like PVV, can get so much attention in the Netherlands and become the biggest in a major city like Almere, it makes me feel deeply ashamed to be human....

MM: To what extent are the lyrics a reflection on what directly surrounds you. Close to home things are going relatively well, and the feelings of true poverty and desperation seem to stem from countries at the far end of the world...

Che: The lyrics are indeed mainly based on what is happening close by. However I frequently travel to Bali, and I would really like to move there, which I will do eventually, I'm sure. Over there the people have virtually nothing. A small house, a scooter and about 100 Euro to get by... and they can! By living such a simple life, you have a better focus on each other and trying to achieve happiness that way. For me, I think it's our environment which oozes desperation. It lacks integrity. I miss the purity in people. Everytime I get home and we need to pick up our luggage at Schiphol airport, I'm already feeling homesick and wonder why I even bother coming back. We have it all,

and are still unhappy. There's no other country in which so many people suffer from stress and burn-out. And it's spreading all across Europe. In the end it's not about that Jaguar or about that 90" LCD television or a pair of sneakers. It's about happiness and doing the right things in life. We're trying to achieve our goals and dreams at the expense of others, and are often successful that way. In the last couple of years, faith has become more important in my life, be it in an agnostic way. Karma has been guiding me. I'm very happy; I am extremely happy with the life I have been living. I always try not to hurt other people, not just for me, but because I think it's wrong. And that's what I've noticed around me, people living their lives primarily for material things, thinking that's what will bring them happiness, while at the same time they're ignoring their basic needs.

MM: And who is 'Dead To This World'?

Che: Everything on this album is connected. We are all 'Generation Doom'. Hopeless and eventually without purpose. We, as mankind, are a bizarre experiment doomed to fail.

MM: So what can we expect in the future from Arma Gathas?

Che: You know I still don't feel like touring a lot, and I am not sure if that's even possible with our jobs. I really want to get up on the stage again with this new group of friends, because we're just living our dream. We just want to do things we like, and that are within reach of this bands possibilities. We don't really think we HAVE to, but are allowed to. I'll never have the intention of living off a band again, I have passed that stage, and don't want to return to it anymore. Still as, we're living in the heartland of Europe it's very easy to go on short trips. We can be in Italy in a day and just return the next. So there's still plenty of opportunity to promote this record the way it should be done...

END MEANS TIME TO END ALL

Lordy, it's approaching five years since I went AWOL from the ranks of Mass Movement writers. The last time I put fingers to keys for MM, the zine was still in paper form - so any of you freeloading, downloading types may not have read my assorted jumble of prose before.

Not only has MM changed in the last five years, but my life has been turned on its head also; which is no doubt the root cause of my MM absenteeism. I won't go into all the details but two years ago my Dad died and, only this April, my Mum passed away also. Both passings were torturous affairs; each the culmination of the ravages that cancer enforces on its victim. Both passings obviously resulted in me traversing from New Zealand back to Ipswich, UK. Not only that, but I am now the owner of a house, and since 30th June 2010, have found myself in the surreal position of being 'a landlord'.

At the start of this year, I was content with my life in New Zealand. I had a half-decent job on the local newspaper. I never expected to be a home owner as, for the last five years at least, I believed my parents' house would be sold to pay for Mum's long-term care. But that all changed in 24 hours when Mum's death throes came from nowhere. I am now unsure whether I will remain in New Zealand permanently and I am unsure whether letting the house is the right move long-term. Either way, this whole experience has emphasized one thing: You never know what tomorrow brings. And I am sure that one Tony Hayward is well aware of that also.

Who is Tony Hayward? Tony Hayward is CEO of BP... y'know...

that company that's responsible for an oil blow-out in the Gulf Of Mexico that is spewing oil out at a rate of at least 35,000 barrels per day which, as I write, is a total in excess of two million barrels.

Hayward knows just how quickly fate (or in BP's case, a gargantuan self-administered failing on multiple levels) can rear up and not just bite you on the arse, but consume you whole before spitting you out for the whole world to slander. Look at the month of April 2010. Early in the month, the company was the apparent epitome of capitalist, corporate splendour boasting of profits totalling \$9 billion, amassed in just the first three months of the year. Ironically, via its new imaging promotion, it simultaneously flaunted itself as a pioneer of clean energy, declaring that BP now stood for 'Beyond Petroleum'. Now that is hysterical in hindsight. On 20th April, the blow-out occurred resulting in not just something as simple as America's worst oil disaster, but a frigid ecological purgatorial fire (T. S. Eliot) on many levels. As new, cynical eyes were directed at BP, it's dodgy past and Hayward's feeble attempts to trivialise surfaced, starting with...

"What the hell did we do to deserve this?"

Pleading for sympathy, Hayward dropped this incongruous little nugget shortly after his well blew. Internal corporate documents state that BP had been struggling for nearly a year to get the well under control. BP also knowingly violated its own safety policies and simply lied to regulators about its (in)ability to cope with a major petroleum release in the Gulf Of Mexico. So, Mr Hayward, you deliberately abstained from installing comparatively cheap safety equipment, ignored environmental protections and lied about your ability to deal with a distinctly probable disaster. You get it bro? You reap what you sow.

"It wasn't our accident."

Hayward dropped this pithy sentence a little later, as the oil was

spreading. But... um... this may seem a little simplistic but, BP owned the fucking well, so it IS your accident. Incidentally, it wasn't an accident. Corners were cut in BP's lust for yet more oily assets, so let's go straight to Hayward's office and the executives swimming around it where I am sure we'll discover all the evidence needed to prove this was no accident.

"The oil is tiny in relation to the total water volume."

That statement not only over-simplifies the issue, but it's downright insulting to anyone with an IQ above single figures - I'll even give Hayward the benefit of that doubt. The total water volume mentioned refers to the Gulf Of Mexico. This may be true in terms of sheer percentages but I wonder whether Hayward would get in a bath full of fresh clean water after I'd pissed in it? It's only a small amount of urine in relation to the total water volume, Tony! It should be noted that this statement from Hayward was delivered two weeks prior to the revelation that the amount of oil spewing out was actually NINE-TEEN times more than what BP had stated.

I have to ask myself though, why am I remotely surprised at the lies of a CEO who leads a company that in the past three decades has devoured competitors like Amoco and Arco? Why am I surprised at the lies of a CEO who leads a company that owns a pipeline between Azerbaijan and Turkey that was built with the aid of land seizures and a contract which effectively grants BP executive power over the Turkish government? Why am I surprised at the lies of a CEO who previously refused to invest in Canadian tar sands on the grounds of

ecological risk, but in 2007 reversed this position and now has a pipeline across Alaska that leaks oil into sensitive habitats? Why am I surprised at the lies of a CEO that heads a company with one of the worst records for both safety and environmental issues? This was recently highlighted by the



Center for Public Integrity that revealed, "97% of all flagrant violations found in the refining industry by government safety inspectors" came at BP facilities. The company with the second-worst record had eight violations against it - BP had 760.

I'm surprised because, even with all the above taken into consideration (not to mention ultra-deep drilling off the coast of Angola), it still shocks me how one massive corporation can promote itself as 'brave' and 'visionary' yet in reality be so callous to its workers (11 BP oil workers are now dead), to renege on safety standards and to be so dismissive of the thousands of people on the Gulf Coast who have had their lives ruined by BP's unquenchable lust for the golden (black gold, that is) dollar.

Compiled to the sounds of 'Staring at the Sea' - THE CURE, 'When The Oil Runs Out' - NEWTOWN NEUROTICS, 'Blood Is On Your Hands' - INSTIGATORS, 'Pathetic Humanity' - AUS ROTTEN, 'Blood For Oil' - ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER, 'Liar' - SEX PISTOLS and accompanied with Guinness, Grilled Pepper Doritos and a 'final-read-through' Jameson's Whisky.

And remember, whatever BP wants you to think it stands for, I know it stands for Buncha Pissers.

Later...

Steve Scanner
scannerzine.com

UNDERDOG

Underdog. Just thinking about the band sends shivers down my spine and makes me smile. They were, and are, the definitive New York Hardcore band. Hell, this magazine is named after one of their songs, so that should tell you about the kind of esteem that these guys are held in around these parts, and so when I was offered to talk to Russ about the band and their new discography, 'Matchless', I jumped at the chance....
Interview by Tim Mass Movement

MM: I guess we should start at the beginning. When where and why did

serious band. We wanted to move away from that fun party feel to do something more like what the Cro-Mags were doing.

MM: Right from Underdog's inception you weren't like the other bands in the New York hardcore scene, you weren't following the set course. Did you always want to shake things up a little bit?

Russ: Yeah. Before I was in Murphy's Law even, and before Underdog – if you look back there was a band called Child Abuse, that was me and Dean's first band. I quit child abuse before they put that 7" out, but I was in Child Abuse for the same reason: I wanted to move up a little bit; I wanted to



Underdog first get together?

Russ: We first got together when I was in Murphy's Law and Richie was in Numbskulls and they opened up for us a few times and I thought they were a pretty good band. When I got kicked out of Murphy's Law I immediately phoned Richie and asked if they still needed a new bass player – I had seen them a couple of times and they had had some girl on bass who they said was just filling in – so I called Richie and told him that I wanted to do it, and he was all excited and told me to come over to his house to get a tape. I was living in Manhattan at the time with my girlfriend and I didn't know it but he lived just a couple of blocks away! So I went right over there and he made me a cassette, booked a couple of practise sessions, learned the songs that week and that was that. Once that happened, his band the Numbskulls were like a fun comedy band kind of like Murphy's Law and we both wanted to move in a more serious direction with the lyrics. Numbskulls was kind of like a joke name so once I'd joined the band, we changed the name and we changed the direction. We went from being a fun party band to being a more

progress. When Underdog got together a lot of the bands were doing a standard fast then slow then fast format for their songs. We were listening to a lot of reggae back then, a lot of reggae, and some old stuff – some Sabbath and the Who and Stiff little Fingers and stuff like that. There were enough bands doing that fast slow fast stuff that -do you know what we wanted? Music that we would listen to. So I guess we weren't looking to shake things up as much as we were looking to be ourselves really. Underdog has really always gone it's own way and not really wondered what the crowd was doing.

MM: What do you think makes Underdog unique? What makes you sound different?

Russ: We didn't follow the crowd. We didn't do what was cool. We weren't afraid to be different. It was cool to fit in but we weren't afraid to not fit in. A lot of people would wear a uniform, but I was a skateboarder and would go down to CBGBs with my skater shorts on and a backwards baseball cap and my board, and skinheads would shout things like "What are you doing here

skater boy?" and they didn't know who I was and before they knew it they had a skateboard round their heads and they didn't say it again. And with Underdog we just always went our own way.

MM: Were you surprised how well that first 7" did?

Russ: Well back then we didn't know how well it did. When I got really surprised about the 7" was when the internet came in and I saw the 7" on sale on Ebay for \$250. It did well, but I wasn't really aware of how well it did.

MM: When the album Vanishing Point came out it really stood out, and has stood the test of time better than a lot of the other albums that were around at the time. I was wondering how you felt about the album now and if your feelings about it have changed over time?

Russ: The songs on the Vanishing Point is a lot of the reason why the band is still playing now. Those songs, I love them and I'm so proud of them, and if they were more like our really old stuff that's kind of more like regular hardcore then we would have been a dime a dozen. We were always a little bit different but it was what we managed to achieve on the Vanishing Point kind of sums up why I wanted to play. If you listen to any one part on that album: the drums, the bass, anything its all just good music. It's so much different to a Youth of Today record or something like that. I don't think you

music was going on, what kind of music the American market was listening to and buying and wanted to hear and didn't even think about music for a while. After a few years, me and Dean started up a new band called Huge ... we've just recorded 5 songs and it sounds pretty cool. It's basically the three guys from Underdog except without Richie, I do lead vocals and we have another bass player; but basically, because we are working on Huge, that's why it was so easy to get Underdog back together, because we were all still working together. It was all because of that unfinished business like you say, but then Richie got back in touch with us in New York and we were all ready and willing to start doing underdog again

MM: Do you want to tell us a bit about Matchless?

Russ: The Bridge 9 thing – they are brilliant, awesome. I had talked to a lot of record labels about doing this and nothing was sticking out, or showing much enthusiasm, then Revelation really wanted to do it. After a show in Chicago I was introduced by a roadie to Chris Wren the boss of Bridge 9, and he was saying how he'd love to do an Underdog discography, but I had to tell him that we were doing it with Revelation. After that we weren't really keeping in touch with Revelation, things were moving really slowly and I kept checking out the Bridge 9 website: they really looked after their bands and were really working hard at promoting bands. They put a lot of effort into



can even compare. The only thing I don't like about the Vanishing Point is the production on it. The production could have been so much better especially the guitar sound. It's all out of our hands now, and back then we didn't know anything about it until the record was out but it's very disappointing.

MM: What was it with you guys and guitarists? You seemed to go through them like most bands go through drummers...

Russ: I don't know. We just seemed to go through them and be unable to keep a guitar player. Like in 1989 when we got rid of Chuck and we had been through so many – almost one a year and it seemed like so much work to keep teaching the guitar players the songs, I think that if we had managed to keep our guitar players we would have kept going.

MM: How did the short break after that first US tour turn into 16 years?

Russ: Well, we went to take a short break, but then the whole idea of having to teach someone the whole set, to be able to find a guitar player who could play all that reggae and play all those leads.. we would find somebody who could play the chords for the songs but couldn't play the leads or the reggae, or they could play the reggae but couldn't do something else. It was so hard to find somebody but we just didn't keep in touch.. I didn't keep in touch with Richie, and after a while he moved on and started Into Another, so I guess Into Another was the real end to Underdog.

MM: Did you miss the band during all that time and did you ever feel there was unfinished business with Underdog?

Russ: Definitely unfinished business with Underdog. It would have been a different story if we hadn't taken that long, if we'd kept on playing. I think Richie's heart wasn't in it, as Underdog could have kept going when he set up Into Another, and Underdog could have changed and evolved to sound like a cross between Underdog and Into Another. If we didn't take that break it might of gone that way and that would have been something really special. When Underdog did break up I kind of got bummed out about what kind of

the packaging and the branding and their bands were touring. So after a few months I emailed Chris Wren and said that I'd like to talk to him about bringing the Underdog discography to Bridge 9 and he called me within 2 hours to follow it up. He was really excited as Underdog had been his favourite band since forever. They re-released our first single last year and that went really well, they did a fantastic job on that. They've been setting up all kinds of promotional support, we're really happy with Bridge 9 and we're very excited, the packaging and everything is looking great.

MM: Any chance of a new Underdog album?

Russ: I don't think there is much chance of a whole Underdog album. There definitely is a chance of a 4 track ep or something like that though. We were thinking it might be cool to do some obscure cover songs, maybe two covers and two new songs.

MM: What do you guys have planned?

Russ: We are trying to play in the States every Saturday in the summer. We are trying to do one off shows where we can drive home every night. The reason being that between the four of us there are now 9 children in Underdog's family and it's important to us to get back from the show and get up with the family on Sunday. We are hoping to get over to Europe to play for you guys, maybe do 5 shows in a row and then come back so we would be away from the family for maybe 7 days. That's what we are trying to set up right now. I'd like to do the same thing for Japan and Australia.

MM: If there's anything that you'd like to add...

Russ: I would just like to thank the younger kids for listening. To encourage them to go out and buy the record so that they can hear where the younger bands got started and hopefully these younger kids will accept us and see that we're a bit different: with a little bit of reggae, a little bit of rock, a bit more singing instead of screaming. Tell the skateboarders to come out and see us too.

CRIME IN STEREO

The last time I interviewed Crime In Stereo they were in between albums, on a European tour with New Found Glory and very unsure of their future. Since then they have released another album that has stepped further away from their hardcore punk roots, but closer to mainstream success. *I Was Trying to Describe You to Someone* was released by Bridge Nine Records this year to critical acclaim, and has garnered the band rave reviews in the mainstream rock press, festival appearances and tours with Glassjaw and Brand New. I spoke to guitarist Alex before their headline show at Le Pub in Newport.

Interview by Leigh MM

Photo's by Meghan McInnis

MM: Last time I interviewed you my final question was "what does the future hold for Crime In Stereo" and you said that you'd either "blow the fuck up or break the fuck up". Which one at this point do you feel that you're closer to?

Alex: That's actually a phenomenal question that I really don't have an answer for. I would say that it could go either way at any minute.

MM: You've just played some big tours in America, you supported Brand New and Glassjaw and now you're headlining a UK tour, so I'm guessing at the moment you feel that you're working more towards the former than the latter.

Alex: Yeah, we're doing all the big festivals over here like Download and Reading & Leeds and everything. Again, I don't know that I have an answer for that.

MM: The latest album (*I Was Trying To Describe You To Someone*) is even more experimental than the album which came before (*Is Dead*). Was it a conscious decision to be more experimental or was that something that naturally came from jamming?

Alex: Yeah, it comes more out of just messing around and the desire to not want to do the same thing twice. We don't set out to be the most experimental band or anything because obviously we are not going to be. We're not going to end up being like Rush or fucking Yes or The Mars Volta or some band like that. Here's the thing; people misconstrue personal experiment with the idea that as a band we're trying to be the fucking craziest band on the planet.

That's not the case, we're not the best musicians on the planet, we're never going to be and again we're not going to be Rush or anything like that, we don't even want to be. We just want to push ourselves personally, we want to get better. We want to be better musicians; we want to be better at what we do than what we had been previously. What people are seeing as experimentation; it is, but it's us pushing our own personal boundaries, not trying to make some grand statement of 'we're going to change music' because we're not and we don't have any delusions that we are.

MM: I suppose it's a natural progression – starting off as a punk band, growing older and trying to break away from the boundaries of punk music and go in different ways.

Alex: Yeah, at this point we would have to make a seriously conscious effort to still play punk music, because we've just moved beyond that to a great extent and our skills as musicians, the various things we do whether it's drums or vocals or guitars, just where we're naturally at, we're doing other things than playing blast-beats and punk songs. So it would take a conscious effort for us to make a punk record. The truth is that us making a hardcore record would be far more insincere than us doing what we do because it's not what comes naturally to us anymore.

MM: I spoke to you before about how it seems strange that your older punk records were on different labels and then you moved to Bridge Nine, a label known for hardcore and you've experimented with your sound whilst on the Bridge Nine roster. Do you think that your band has helped Bridge Nine to open the door to what they can have on their label? Since Crime In Stereo they have signed bands like Polar Bear Club and Lemuria.

Alex: I'd like to think so, I'd hate to speak for them, but I do think they had a standard hardcore roster before we arrived and I don't know that it's because of us, probably not. I think the fact that they signed us was indicative of the fact that's where they wanted to go. I think they had it in their heads that they wanted to branch out, so like 'Crime In Stereo fits the bill' and then 'Polar Bear Club fits the bill' and then Lemuria and all the other things they've done whether it's New Found Glory. Even Strike Anywhere and Paint It Black. I like to think that we've kind of helped them out, hopefully as much as

they've helped us out, but I don't it's because of us but I think we were the first salvo in them wanting to branch out, which is awesome. You can't do the same thing forever.

MM: As far as being 'experimental', the artwork for the latest record is not what you'd expect from a punk band...

Alex: Do you hate it?

MM: I don't hate it, I'm just not sure I 'get' it, I can't work it out.

Alex: I don't really want to talk about the artwork, if that's all right? I know there's a lot of people out there who don't like it, that's cool, it's their opinion and they're welcome to it, I am very happy with it.

MM: You're in the touring cycle for the latest record now, have you started to think about writing new material?

Alex: I'm working on some songs only because I'm always working on songs. We don't say that we're going to write a record and then sit down and write it. I play my guitar every day and write pretty much every day, I'm always writing stuff, so we have some songs. We feel like we're at the very beginning with this record [*I Was Trying To Describe You To Someone*], so we're not even thinking about a new record. We love working in the studio, so we feel that if you put us in the studio any day then we'll give you our best effort and hopefully some really good material so we feel that we could go and make songs at any minute, but we don't have any plans to record or anything like that.

MM: Bridge Nine brought out their compilation last year and you gave them the song 'war'. Didn't you write that song in the studio specifically for that comp?

Alex: We were going to do a cover, but the artist's lawyers said that we couldn't. We were working on the cover when we found out we couldn't do it and the pressing deadline for the compilation was the Monday morning, so our track had to be done by Sunday night, and we found out that we couldn't do the cover on the Friday. So we basically wrote the song on the Friday in the studio, tracked it on the Saturday, mixed it Sunday and sent it off Monday morning to be mastered. It's a strange song.

MM: I really, really like that song.

Alex: I like that song too. What's weird is that Scotty had plans or something that day, so wasn't planning on tracking and he came in, and there's basically only one drum beat in that song and he literally tracked that beat and left. It was all we had to work with so it was a crazy experience. Scotty basically gave us just one beat and we had no fills or changes, so we had one beat to work with and me and Kristian just sat down and started fucking around. The acoustic that you hear at the end of the song was me just playing that riff, Kristian just started singing that part and the mic happened to be running. We listened back and were like 'wow, that's great' and we built the song out of that. So that part that you hear at the end was off the top of our heads, just messing around and that was where the song came from.

MM: There are acoustic parts to songs on the new album that I'm guessing came about after the session writing 'war'.

Alex: It feels good that we don't have to think 'well this isn't punk' or whatever. When we were doing *Troubled Stateside* we were trying to kind of push the boundaries of a hardcore record, but we were still very much constrained and actually even on *Is Dead* there were still a lot of constraints where we would be like 'oh, how are people going to react to this' and by the new record we just didn't give a fuck. We were like 'let's do our own thing, who cares?'

MM: You were going to open *Is Dead* with a slower song, 'Let Me Take You Out', which ended up on *Selective Wreckage*. What were the reasons for leaving it off *Is Dead*?

Alex: I fucking love that song, I have such a soft spot in my heart for that song. Yeah, it was supposed to be on *Is Dead*, and so really was 'Everywhere and All the Time'. 'Let Me Take You Out' got finished, 'Everywhere and All the Time' didn't. If they were both done then they both would've gone on *Is Dead* as they would've balanced each other out, but with *Is Dead* only being eleven songs, and we already had 'Orbitor' and 'Unfortunate Tourists', we felt that 'Let Me Take You Out' would've slowed the record down a little too much. That basically would've been a quarter of the record being slow, drawn out songs, so for that reason we decided to leave it off

MM: When you're recording new songs, do you think about how it's going to go over in a live setting, like in a sweaty pub tonight?

Alex: We figured out with the new stuff how we were going to perform it live, but we didn't think 'are kids going to be able to stage-dive to this?'. We feel that, with the new stuff, we were able to perform them live quickly, compared to the Is Dead songs which took us so long to be able to perform well live. We kind of recorded Is Dead beyond our means, so it took as a little while to nail it live every night, whereas with the new record we were very conscious about what our abilities and limitations were. We weren't think about whether kids could mosh to it. If you want to mosh or stagedive or whatever there are a million bands that do that better than we ever did anyway.

MM: When you've played shows with bands like Brand New and Glassjaw, how do you feel that you've gone over with their fans?

Alex: Great, the tours were really positive for us. It's tough, those bands have such cult followings that it's kind of hard to turn their heads, but we did really well. We were really grateful for the opportunity.

MM: On this European tour you're performing headline shows and playing festivals across the continent. You're also playing a special show in Kingston, performing the Troubled Stateside album from start to finish. Where did the idea for that come from? A Wilhelm Scream recently played their Mute Print album through in the same venue.

Alex: Oh, cool. We have done it in the States and the promoter asked us to do it in Kingston. We did one in New York and one in LA. They went over really well. We knew that kids were really keen on it over here, so we wanted to do one here. The truth is we love playing our new stuff and we've been playing the Stateside songs for years. Having so many new songs we'd rather play the new stuff, but we know that kids still love hearing the older stuff, and we don't dislike playing it, we just don't like playing it every night, so the shows were more for the fans that have been with us and have loved us since that record. We know that we don't play a lot of those songs as much as we used to, so it was kind of like 'come out and hear your favourite songs'.

MM: Are you tempted to do an Is Dead show?

Alex: We would love to. It was weird, we didn't know that there was such demand for it until we did the Troubled Stateside shows, and then so many people asked us 'when are you gonna do Is Dead?' and so I guess we will some time, that would be very cool to do. I would enjoy that a lot. There's still a couple of songs off that record that we've never played live. 'Choker' has never been played live, and I don't think that 'Unfortunate Tourists' has either. 'Vicious Teeth' has only been played once or twice, so it would be really cool to do.



THE ESSENCE OF MADNESS

Ed Wood – The Author

We, as humans, often mistake our imagination as a psychological mirage of unrelated images from some distant and detached source. But, in fact, the veil that separates all that is real from the murkiness of an impalpable, mental landscape is very thin, indeed. And it is from behind this veil, this mistakably detached source, that imagination reigns supreme.

Many writers penetrate the veil to gather their creative instincts, after which they return to the quiet comfort of a sound mind. Other writers, however, become fixated in the uneven topography of the human psyche, and they cannot extricate themselves from the many pitfalls that lie within. With the addition of drugs and alcohol, the road map to sanity becomes rather convoluted, and some writers remain in this mental quagmire until reality caves in around them.

Edgar Allen Poe was an example of someone who abused various substances, mostly alcohol. Yet his ability to convey the essence of absolute misery through the written word was uncanny. The world of literature has paved a road for troubled souls, many of whom have given mankind a source of escape in the stories that they tell. But in exchange for their talents, these same troubled souls have forfeited their very own sanity.

One such troubled soul was Ed Wood. By now, most people are aware of his dubious talents as a filmmaker, but very few individuals are knowledgeable of his literary accomplishments.

As an author, it is estimated that Ed wrote over 75 exploitation novels, most of which were distributed by small, independent publishers. For his efforts, he would receive a paltry sum (less than \$200.00) in royalties for each novel published. The same fee was paid to him for original screenplays. Although he managed to scratch out a meager living, his destructive personality would prevent him from achieving true, literary fame.

Wood's addiction to alcohol is credited for his rapid descent into the dark depths of depravity. Combine his dependency on liquor with a proclivity for cross-dressing, and the results make for an interesting character study. Ed's rather unconventional lifestyle was anecdotally represented in his novels, as many of the storylines were surprisingly similar to his real life experiences.

Ed Wood was born, Edward D. Wood Jr., on October 10, 1924 in Poughkeepsie, New York. According to Wood, his mother wanted a baby girl, and therefore, she dressed the young Edward in girls' attire. Apparently, this had a lasting effect on Ed because he continued his fetish for women's clothing as an adult. Wood's famous "an-



gora sweater" was not only his personal favorite item of clothing, but it also became his iconic trademark as a film director. Numerous publicity photographs show him wearing the sweater while sitting in the director's chair.

Unfortunately, Ed would never achieve the superstar status as a filmmaker that he so longed for in life. Instead, his work in film would be mocked and ridiculed, which ultimately led to his being forced out of the movie business.

Shattered and forlorn, Edward D. Wood Jr. turned to his dependency on alcohol in order to gain solace. As his life began to spiral out of control, he sought out a scanty living as a writer of cheap exploitation pulp. Relying on his idiosyncratic lifestyle as a cross-dresser and his overindulgent dependency to liquor, Ed Wood churned out page after page of smut-riddled fiction.

The following list of books (I might add that these are a few of the titles that I've personally read) is just a sampling of Ed's foray into the world of paperback pornography:

BLACK LACE DRAG
(Raven Books RB 713 1963, 160pp.)

Wood's earliest known published paperback novel. The protagonist, Glen Marker, is a cross-dresser who appears as a "headliner" in

various, shady nightclubs. This particular novel is a very close representation of Ed's flamboyant lifestyle.

ORGY OF THE DEAD
(Greenleaf Classic GC 205, 1966, 160pp.)

Made into a feature film by the same title, the book tells the tale of monsters that appear in a cemetery to accompany a bevy of performing strip teasers. A very strange book – an even stranger film.

WATTS – THE DIFFERENCE
(Pad Library PL 564, 1966, 192pp.)

Drinking, drugs, violence and sex are all featured in this story about a black television actor (Rocky Alley the cowboy) and his lover. If once wasn't enough, this novel was later released under the

pseudonym of "Ray Jones" in 1969.

SIDE-SHOW SIREN
(Sundown Reader SR 618, 1966, 190pp.)

One of my personal favorites, Wood relies on his own, postwar experiences as a carnival worker to lend authenticity to the storyline. A series of ghastly murders and a beautiful, young girl are the centerpieces of this drama.

DRAG TRADE
(Triumph News TNC 106, 1967, 159pp.)

This is another one of my personal favorites (mostly for the fact that Ed appears in glorious drag on the cover). The storyline includes an array of off-beat characters who are involved in a variety of sordid affairs. Fun stuff if you are of that mindset or screwed up on drugs.

.WATTS...AFTER
(Pad Library PL 578, 1967, 191pp.)

It's the return of cowboy star Rock Alley, as he battles with Black Panthers. The story is a very interesting example of the turbulent and wild '60's.

DEVIL GIRLS
(Pad Library PL 566, 1967, 189pp.)

Sex, sex and more sex. Ed Wood at his depraved best.

DEATH OF A TRANSVESTITE
(Pad Library NT 821, 1967, 192 pp.)

The cover alone is worth the price of admission – some dude totally decked out in S&M attire. In the background is an electric chair; the tagline reads: "Let me die in drag!" This is a follow up to Wood's earlier novel, *Black Lace Drag*. Character, Glen Marker returns as a transvestite "hit-man" awaiting death in the electric chair. What an imagination! Notice that the lead character's name is "Glen"...any similarity to Ed's film masterpiece, *Glen or Glenda*?

RAPED IN THE GRASS
(Pendulum Pictorial 002, 1968, 157 pp.)

What more could any self-respecting, young woman ask for? A couple of American babes travel to a mythical, south of the border country in search of adventure. Judging by the title, they got more than they bargained for – beaten, raped and tortured by a band of South American guerrillas out for a day of fun and games. Anyway, justice prevails as the only female of the band turns on her comrades-in-arms and tortures them. Here's the kicker; she's a lesbian. This is truly an Ed Wood original.

THE PERVERTS
(Viceroy Books VP 294, 1968, 160 pp.)

Written under the ghost name of "Jason Nichols," the book basically is an excuse to express many of the "kinky" fetishes that Wood appreciated.

THE GAY UNDERWORLD
(Viceroy Books VP 291, 1968, 187 pp.)

If you really want to laugh your ass off, be sure and read this baby. It's very similar in content to his book, *Drag Trade*...you know, the one with Ed in drag on the cover? There's one thing for certain — the man knows no shame.

SEX, SHROUDS AND CASKETS
(Viceroy Books VP 291, 1968, 187 pp.)

It's rather hard to describe this gem. Basically, it's about a group of sexual deviates that pretend to be religious gurus in order to gain the trust of impoverished individuals. Anything and everything goes in this rag.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Around 1970, Ed really took a turn for the worst. His alcoholism had hit new heights of depravity, and his mind was "heading south" at record speed. He became belligerent and delusional. In those rare occasions when he managed to have a lucid moment, Ed would fancy himself as a medical expert on the fine art of sex. He wrote volumes of "how to" manuals under the pretense that they were co-authored by a legitimate medical doctor/psychiatrist. Whether or not he actually did seek the advice of a medical professional in the writing process is unknown; however, it is most certain that these self-help manuals were nothing more than a cheap advertising ploy to sell books.

About this same time period, Ed was actively involved in making soft-core pornography. Even though Hollywood had turned its back on Ed's career, he, nevertheless, still had the dream of making movies, regardless of the genre. During the late sixties and early seventies, he made a dozen or so very low budgeted films involving various sexual themes. Although he did write other screenplays that were a bit less explicit in nature, the bulk of his film work consisted of low-grade smut.

It might be of value to note that Ed Wood was a passionate person. By all accounts of those individuals who knew him personally, he had a penchant for life and a flair for the unusual. However, Wood's creative nature was dramatically weakened by his obsession for alcohol, and the effects of his disease were devastating. As a result, he died virtually penniless and hopelessly in despair. Ed's inability to escape the various snares of a troubled mind, coupled with his cravings for alcohol, rendered him a victim of his own madness...a stranger to his own sanity.

Yet, despite his madness, Ed Wood has gained considerable posthumous fame. Tim Burton's film – *Ed Wood* (1994) – was an Oscar-winning success. *Nightmare of Ecstasy*, the brilliant book by Rudolf Grey, describes in detail the

many facets of Ed's unique life, as seen through the eyes of those who knew him best. There have been countless articles written about the man since his death in 1978, not to mention, several documentaries.

Edward D. Wood Jr. was a true American original, and it's very unlikely that there shall ever be anyone to replace him.

Doug Crill



SKULL CRUSHER

Since the 80s hardcore bands wanted to remove the veil which so many of us hide behind. We couldn't see the world as it really was, caught in the middle of the Cold War. New century, same old story as we're still 'Blinded by Illusion' (the title of their debut EP) at least as far as New York based Skull Crusher are concerned. Four furious songs that have so much energy, I needed to find out more...

Interview by Martijn Welzen

New York City hardcore/metal cross-over. On this fateful night we were feeling the jam enough that we decided to spring for another hour at the rehearsal spot and managed to write the riffs for what would eventually become "Blinded By Illusion," the title track off the four song 12".

Fast forward a few weeks later; he and I fine tuned the song to the point where we both felt like bringing it to a legitimate recording studio to track and get an idea of how it might sound with bass, vocals and some lead guitar



MM: I was wondering, as there are just four songs on your release, how do you go about writing the songs? As there are only four, how can you be sure people won't dissect them endlessly. Are you aware of that, does that in any way influence your songwriting?

Ed: Ya know, the four song thing really just came about naturally. To give you a little history, Skull Crusher started out as just a project between me and Gordo (Double Cross/Impact Fanzine.) He and I have been tight for years and often would get together to jam and just sort of play whatever we happened to be feeling that day. On one of these random jam nights we started to hit on a sound that we were both really into.

Gordo and I were always heavy into The Icemen, Absolution, and The Cro-Mags but around this time that was pretty much a constant soundtrack. Possibly as a result, the sound we were starting to hit upon was a sort of 1989 era

tracks. In the studio I played all guitars, bass, and sang while Gordo handled the percussions. The results of these recordings impressed us enough that we decided to get together and write another song along the same lines as "Blinded." Well, as often is the case when you start to gel with something creative, one more song became three more songs and the next thing you know we had a four song ep recorded with just the two of us being behind all the music and vocals.

MM: An advantage has to be, that with just four songs, you can put so much more energy into it. Do you think that will change when a full length is recorded? Can you maintain that level of intensity for that amount of time?

Ed: I totally hear you... so many bands seem to release amazing EPs but when it comes time to knock out the full-length the energy and intensity isn't

always the same. Obviously this isn't always the case but it does happen enough to be a concern. My feelings are with Skull Crusher, if we don't have an LPs worth of hard songs we won't release an LP. I have nothing against releasing another 12" EP or even a 7" if that's what we have when we're ready to drop new material. While we have aspirations to tour, etc. we don't feel like we have to follow up the EP with an LP just because that is the traditional path. If the songs are there we'll do it, if not, expect another EP.

MM: Being from New York, you can definitely hear you're firmly rooted in the old NYHC sound, but you also mention early Metallica as an influence as well. How they creep into your music and is there something in particular in their sound which appealed to you?

Ed: Well... growing up on the East Coast, New York Hardcore was always a tremendous influence. While I grew up going to shows all over NJ, CT, and NY, New York City was always the home of the best and heaviest bands that hardcore had to offer. "New York City Hardcore: The Way It Is" says it all. Just about every band on that compilation has had a major influence on my life, even beyond just the hardcore scene. And lets not forget the early bands like Antidote, Urban Waste, and The Mob... all that stuff left an indelible mark on me and how I see and hear music today. The Metallica influence is much different. I love everything Metallica did up to and including "And Justice For All..." and have always viewed them as masters of their genre. While Youth of Today perfected Straight Edge Hardcore, I feel like Metallica (in their early years) perfect their brand of heavy metal. Now, to cite them as a musical influence is almost nutty because I'll be the first to admit that I am by no means even in the same universe as those guys from a musicianship standpoint. Not even close. But I did find, when writing these songs, that ideas would pop into my head that were clearly inspired by things I heard on Metallica records. My interpretation of what I heard might not really sound exactly like Metallica but to deny the influence would be dishonest.

MM: How important is the history of the NYHC scene to you?. Is that just personal taste, or is there something the older bands had that modern NY bands lack? You seem to have more in common with bands like Killing Time, Sick of it All and Cro-Mags...

Ed: Like I said earlier, for Skull Crusher, New York Hardcore is everything. I look into the past with such reverence and respect because this is music formulated by guys who have seen it all and done it all. I mean, I can't pose, I grew up in the suburbs of New Jersey... while I was a quick train ride away from CBGBs there wasn't much Survival of the Streets going on in my life. So, I really just have such an incredible amount of gratitude for the bands that came before for letting me be part of a scene that they created. Some of the bands I played in before this are: Hands Tied, The Killing Flame, Face The Enemy, and Triple Threat. There were others but that should give you a good idea of where I'm coming from.

MM: Not sure how old you guys are, but were you already 'in' the scene in the 80s? Whatever your age, it feels like you have been around for ages... How important was and is HC's past for you guys...

Ed: While I listen to all kinds of music from all different eras, my formative years were the 1980s. My entire aesthetic pallet is pretty much locked in 1980—1989. How I dress, how I design, etc. it all (to a fault) heavily focused on that decade. So, naturally, the music I love and the songs I write (or more recently, help write) are firmly locked in that decade. That might be a bad thing to some but for me it is just natural. And yeah, I grew up going to shows in the late 80s so I was able to see the majority of the bands who would end up being the main influences for SkullCrusher. This is probably a good time to mention the band's line-up and our ages: Vocals: Ed McKirdy – 36, Guitar: Dan Cav – 37, Guitar: Hugo Fitzgerald – 31, Bass: James Tsaptsinos – 36 and Drums: Brian Dougherty - 28

MM: 'Blinded By Illusion' the title track of your EP, seems to be the sort of song that also links in with the Cold War which still was a real threat at the beginning of the 80s. What current events triggered the writing this particular song?

Ed: 'Blinded By Illusion' was absolutely written as a response to what has been going on in the world. You mention The Cold War, which again was very much in my consciousness as a kid growing up in 1980s America. The difference with The Cold War and The War on Terror that we are waging today, however, are vast. Two discrepancies come to mind: 1. The enemy in The Cold War was clear. Russia was our enemy and we knew it. 2. Although this was a war that potentially could have catastrophic implications, the threat (and the entire "war" really) always felt theoretical (mutually assured destruction, etc.). There was nothing theoretical about what happened on Sep-

Western Civilization. Like I say in the song, "The enemy is clear, it's time to open your eyes." Because of what I can only guess is a combination of political correctness and terminal good will, there people who fail to see that—they are blinded by the illusion of security and blinded by the illusion that all people on this planet are good. They fail to see that evil exists and that we need to proactively fight it. Without a clear understanding of what and who the enemy is we can never win.

MM: How does the cover link in with the title track or maybe all songs on the EP? Is the cover about the four horsemen bringing forth the end of our world?

Ed: The cover art (illustrated by Linas Garsys) absolutely represents the end of the world; the piece is titled Skull Crusher Apocalypse. I honestly believe that the short-sighted mentality of the people I described in the previous question who fail to recognize that there is a clear enemy could ultimately lead to our destruction.

MM: 'Chasing the Dragon' is about drug (ab)use. Is that song a warning, or is it more about your frustration concerning the subject? Is it something you have experienced in your own life?

Ed: 'Chasing the Dragon' is written about heroin, specifically, and it's power to destroy people even before they have died. There is a line in there which addresses the question of warning "This is not a wake up call, 'cause all hope's been bled / This is a eulogy, for the walking dead." This is a song of hopelessness in the face of this toxic addiction. As far as experiencing it in my own life, I've never even had a single drink of alcohol and I continue to be Straight Edge. That is something I know will never change. But I have had friends fall victim to and ultimately die from drugs. At a certain point (especially with heroin) it seems like people are lost with no chance of recovery. That's what this song is about—they are the walking dead.

MM: 'A Real Rain' seems to be about the same subject, albeit from the angle of a 'disease' eating away at the moral standards of modern society. Are drugs a disease?

Ed: Drugs are certainly part of the disease but this song is more about the sharp contrast between society's victims and society's enemies—both of whom occupy the same space on our streets. Unfortunately there are thousands of people in this country who for reasons beyond their control end up on the street with no place to sleep and no food to eat. I see them every day and I feel so helpless in the face of their struggle. I feel like there is more I can do to help—"we need to rise up try to get them on track." On the other hand, the streets are also filled with people who are hedonistic, amoral fiends out for their high, indiscriminate sex, and random violence. The combination of innocent people struggling to survive and street urchins out for evil makes for a complicated set of circumstances on the streets of our cities.

MM: You also ask yourself the question 'should I fight or run?' have you made up your mind about that? Listening to the song, and in fact the entire EP, you seem to be ready to fight...

Ed: Well... the "fighting" in those lyrics is more about standing up for yourself when faced with threats from the evil side of the street. The way the song plays out the decision to fight or run is left unanswered. The chaos you hear following that line could be either.

MM: And not to leave 'Faith in Failure' out... the most striking lyric for me was 'Paranoia, fear, theories... pushed as facts'. These few words seem to sum up what the modern media. How can we ever avoid being scared by what, in the real world, might just be a small threat?

Ed: Well it's funny you say that because I don't think all the threats are "just small threats." I respect your opinion but really the lyrics to "Blinded..." and my explanation should address my thoughts on this. 'Faith in Failure' is more about the mainstream American media's attempts to always paint the worst possible picture when it comes to our efforts to fight terror where it is born. For example, no matter how many successes it seemed like we were having in Afghanistan, the only thing our media would cover would be our failures, never a kind word about the progress we were making in taking down the enemy and spreading democracy. True, there have been tremendous struggles, missteps, and tragic errors, but our media seems to rely on our failures to prove their point. They seem to think that any aggression against our enemies is wrong so, in order to help prove this, only cover our failures and never our successes. "Lost again, you love to lose, 'cause you have so much to prove." That's what that line is about. At times it almost seems like they are hoping that we (America) fails so they can prove their point and ride their wave of self righteousness.

MM: Are you also torn in between the things that seem to centralise on

city life, like drugs, crime, poverty and unemployment than the grand scheme of things like war and terrorism? It feels like that since 9/11, in NYC, more than anywhere else the local problems and global issues have collided. What has that done to the people living in the city, and for the hardcore bands portraying in their own way, the cities daily life?. Are you also torn between global politics and personal issues to some extent?

Ed: I have to say, New York City is the most resilient place on the planet. I think it's a testament to this city's courageous residents that life here feels pretty close to how it felt pre-9/11. Sure people are more aware and conscious of suspicious activity, etc. but New York City is just as vibrant, full of life, and teeming with energy, art, and culture as it ever was. The fact that we have risen above the threat to go on and lead our lives normally says a lot about New York's unwillingness to be pushed around. I wouldn't say that I'm torn between politics and personal issues—the feelings I have on both seems to come from different sections of my brain. I will say that personal issues can be more challenging to address in a way that satisfies me lyrically. While my feelings on the global front are pretty cut and dry my inner conflicts can be a lot more complicated.

MM: Linking in with above it is fair to say that Skull Crusher, possibly just like the bands that paved the way, have created a scrapbook of what the world was / does look like with every single release?

MM: Maybe this question is a bit too far fetched, but do you have any idea how your music can and does develop when touring either the US or Europe, as you gradually get to know different parts of the world? It's interesting how bands like H2O or Sick of it All, also look at the bigger picture now, when in the beginning their world was pretty much the streets they grew up on...

Ed: There is an amazing quote by Mark Twain, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." I've been lucky enough to travel all over the globe and this line always rings true. You can't help but view things from a more informed, global perspective when you are exposed to and participate in different countries' culture and everyday life. I can only hope that I continue to see things in the big picture like Sick of it All, etc.

MM: Can you hear when a band is from another borough? Is there something specific in your songs which could maybe pin point you, place you in definitive area? Do problems, and thus influences, differ within the New York boroughs?

Ed: Well, again, I grew up in Northern New Jersey so it would be disingenuous for me to claim to be a New York City expert. However, from a fan's perspective I think you can pick things out that feel like a certain area. For example, Murphy's Law just sounds like they're from Queens. To quote Jimmy Gestapo: "Yeah that's right, you can tell by the way this song is...As-



Ed: Well, I think that is often the case but then, you also have bands whose lyrics might be looking inside rather than out. In other words, sometimes the lyrical content can be just as powerful (if not more) when the topics addressed are much more personal rather than political. That's the great thing about hardcore—it is almost always about sincere feelings and emotions whether directed at the world as a whole or to no one in particular. The feelings and ideas are real. Skull Crusher's lyrics thus far have been more on the literal, global perspective but that could also shift from song to song. The latest song we wrote, for example, deals more with my life working in the corporate world and how I had to put on a mask (figuratively) to get through the day.

toria, Queens rules!"

MM: Reviews of your ep seem to be very positive, has that already fired you up to write new songs? What can we expect from you guys in the near future?

Ed: We have already written two new songs that I think are just awesome (I can say that because the other dudes in the band wrote the music this time!) Plans for the future include a lot of playing out, we are working on putting together a European tour with our friends Stay Hungry, and hopefully either another EP or (if we have enough solid songs) an LP. Thanks so much for the interview and I hope we can make it out to your area soon!

DRI

Do these guys really need any introduction? If you're not familiar with their music, good old fashioned tooth chipping thrash, then chances are you'll have seen their skanking man logo somewhere, on a shirt or as graffiti in a club, so each and everyone of you out there, subliminally or otherwise, knows this band. It's thrashing time, it's time for the Dirty Rotten Imbeciles ...After listening to them for twenty three years, I finally got to talk to Kurt Brecht about all things DRI...

Interview by Tim MM

MM: What initially drew you to Hardcore and lead you to form DRI?

Kurt: I think what drew me to Hardcore was how close you could get to the bands. They were so much more accessible than a big rock and roll band; I liked the music a lot more and the whole do it yourself attitude and the fact that anybody can do it.

MM: Is it true that the name DRI came from your dad?

Kurt: Yes. We used to practice in my parent's house and the room didn't have any insulation and we were so angry – you know? He used to come home from work and he couldn't hear himself think or hear the TV or anything (laughing)

MM: So he used to call you Dirty Rotten Imbeciles?

Kurt: Yeah that and a lot of other stuff (laughs) But that stuck...

MM: So what was the initial reaction to the band like, because when you guys started, what you were doing was vastly different to anything else out there...

Kurt: We were, at that time, going out to a lot of hardcore shows, we were into bands like Verbal Abuse and MDC and we didn't think we were that much different. We were very underground even for an underground band – we practised for about a year before we played our first gig, so people kind of heard about us. A few friends who came over to listen to us practise spread the word, so word started getting out there. So, they started pushing us to play live. We had a lot of songs but some of them were so short we weren't sure if we had enough to put a full set together to play. Finally we put it all together and started playing, then after a while we just moved to California.

MM: What made you move out to San Francisco? How tough was it on the band making that move?

Kurt: It was pretty tough. My brother, Eric, the drummer, and I were in art college and we had to quit that – just leave; Spike had a regular job and he had to quit that and leave, our bass player as well. We went out there, not really intending or knowing that we going to, to stay there for 15 years like we did in the end – we had just heard that we should go out there and that our kind of music would be more popular there. Our kind of music was beginning to be really popular in the San Francisco area.

MM: This was just before the Rock against Reagan tour right?

Kurt: Yeah we went to California and we played the show and then our bass player quit so me and my brother went back to Houston and finished up the first semester of the college. Then we found a new bass player in San Francisco and started practicing with him, and then we got the call from MDC and found out we had got onto the Rock against Reagan tour.

MM: What do you remember most about that tour?

Kurt: Mainly just the shows – playing all sorts of big outdoor shows – lots of college kids and it was kind of like a musical protest road-show really and there were a load of bands on it we really liked so it wasn't like work at all.

Of course we weren't paid anything; they used to give us some food and a bit of money towards gas, but for us it was really an opportunity for us to make some fans.

MM: How do you think the band then progressed between the Dirty Rotten Album and Dealing With It?

Kurt: Well, a lot of them were the same songs but we knew that we could make them sound better because a lot of them had already changed since we'd been playing them live a lot. For us, because of the sound quality, the first album wasn't really anything more than a demo really. Dealing with it was really just a better recording of it. When we got Felix as a drummer – from my brother – he's got a really different kind of feel than my brother, kind of more like a Metallica kind of feel. He was able to add that extra metal edge into the band...y'know?

MM: Yeah, because after Dealing with it you get into Crossover which is a vastly different record from anything you'd ever done. How did your fan-base react to that? You took a massive step forward with that record...

Kurt: There were some people who were pissed off about it – especially in Europe – but we also gained a lot more fans so... I don't know, it's... Any time you jump out there and put yourself out on the line like that you take a risk, but a whole different range of kids could get into us now. We headlined a punk festival a few weeks ago and to follow it up we're going to headline a metal festival in Baltimore. We're able to jump those two scenes comfortably now without anyone getting upset. It's a pretty good place to be actually.

MM: Did you have any idea how important Crossover was going to be as a record? That you would be helping to, in essence, create a whole new musical genre?

Kurt: Well we knew that people had already started labelling us as a crossover band even when Dealing With It was out. I don't really like labels but you're forced to use them so that people know what you're talking about... So, basically it was my idea to use that as the name for the album because that's what it was, and that's what people thought it was...

MM: After twenty eight years as a band, what do you attribute DRI's longevity to?

Kurt: The fans. Just rabid fans wanting us to play all the time. It seems like we don't get a moment's rest and it's "When you gonna go again? You gotta keep going for ever". We just love it. We're a touring band, we've always been a live band so that's the main thing. I get a normal job every now and then, working 40 hours a week but I really don't like it or prefer it. I'm happier when we can get to go back out on the road again and get to make our living with music

MM: I've heard lots of different reasons why there hasn't been a DRI album for 15 years, so can you set the record straight?

Kurt: Well we brought out the last album – Straight Ahead and we toured off that for what must be three or four years. It just seemed to keep going. We'd finish off a 3-4 month US tour then we would be wanted in South America; we'd come back and it would be Dubai and Europe for 3 months and by the time you come back there's a whole other 3 month tour of the US. So we were having a great time with it, then it became the 20th anniversary in there somewhere so we toured that for 2-3 years. For us to stop touring and write a record we need to have some money built up and nobody's throwing money at us for that. Plenty of people want us to put out a record but nobod

wants to help us with that too much.

MM: I guess by now most people know that Spike has been really ill and has thankfully now recovered. What kind of impact did Spike's illness have on a personal level and did it change the way that you view the band?

Kurt: When he got sick we were two weeks from doing a full US tour, so we just had to stop that, and like I said, we're just touring, touring, touring, so originally he just said we would postpone the tour for a short time; he'd have an operation and get back to it. We found out shortly after that, the Doctors said "You're insane you're not going anywhere for a while". It took me probably six months of sitting around thinking "What am I going to do?" before I actually got a job and all that, and started another band as a side project to keep me busy. I've always been very thankful to have the band, but now more than ever; during our hiatus – our time away thrash metal and crossover became quite popular again. We're riding the crest of the wave.

MM: You've just reissued Crossover, do you want to tell us about that?

Kurt: Actually it's been planned for a long time, it just wasn't the right time. It took a lot to get it together; we used to be on a different record label, we switched it over to Beer City, but basically the whole project was stopped

They are a local Texas band, they were called Dead Horse. They broke up a few years back but kind of made a pact to get back together, and they were from Pasadena which is right by Houston and they heard that I was just kicking around and asked me if I wanted to come over. I said told them I wasn't going to buy a microphone or invest even a quarter – I'd just come over and check them out and if it clicks –good and if it doesn't – forget it. They were really cool guys and we've got a 7 song demo out and we've just come up with another 5-6 songs and I'm supposed to go in this week and finish the vocals on them then try to mix them down and we'll have a full album's worth of material –demo quality, but good demo quality.

MM: You ought to get Mike to release that...

Kurt: People can listen to it on Facebook and MySpace

MM: Away from the band, what else do you do? Do you still write? Any more books in the works?

Kurt: I've not written a book in a long time. I used to sell them as a book on CD where I would essentially read my own book then record it and put it onto CD. I sell them at shows and stuff. It's easier for me rather than print up 1000 copies and have them cluttering up my apartment...



during our whole period of time off – it just kind of waited until we were getting ready to get back out on the road again

MM: Any plans to re-release the follow-ups to Crossover?

Kurt: Some of our stuff we can't get near because it's on our old label – it's still out there anyway.

MM: Do you have a personal favourite DRI record: one which you feel really defines the band?

Kurt: I guess Dealing With It, or Full Speed Ahead – the last one. I don't really listen to them that often, but each album I like several songs on any given day then three weeks later I might listen to it again and like completely different songs. When you put out an album, certain songs which you think are going to be real good sometimes don't turn out so well, and others which you don't think are so good which turn out miraculous.

MM: Do you want to tell us a little bit about Pasadena Napalm Division?

Kurt: Some of the guys in the band asked me to come and sing with them.

MM: What does the rest of 2010 look like for DRI?

Kurt: We have a show in the Czech republic next month which is kind of odd as we are flying in for one show and flying straight out again. Then we're touring Central America and in September it all starts all over again in the US.

MM: You guys should hook up with Municipal Waste and go out with them – that would be the dream tour at the moment...

Kurt: Yeah we think about all that stuff we've got a lot of dream tours at the moment, it's just the logistics that cause a problem. We've got a booking agent that looks after all that stuff. He does a pretty good job for us.

MM: Anything to add?

Kurt: If anybody wants to book us it's First Row Talent – a US based company. You can talk to them about bringing us to your home town, we play just about anywhere from little café grills to pizza places to huge giant festivals. Also if there are any record companies out there willing to help us out – some kind of record deal would be sweet.

DOWN TO NOTHING

Sometimes, just sometimes, all you need is a regular dose of good old fashioned HC, and that's exactly what Down To Nothing serve up, and then some. You want Hardcore? You got it...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

Photo's by Todd Pollock

MM: Alright, time to introduce yourself to all the folks out there...You want to give us a brief history of DTN? When, where, how and why did the band get together?

DTN: The band currently is David Wood, Daniel Spector, Jared Carman, and

DTN: Being on Revelation was something that we all loved. They were always pretty cool to us and we were just happy to have the star on the back of a couple of records. They actually could have held us to another release if they wanted to but when we called them one day to see what the deal was Jordan at Revelation said he didn't mind if we wanted to do something else and that he would miss us. We just wanted to do something with Patrick because we respect his work ethic and he also puts out records for David and I's other bands, Terror and Trapped Under Ice. We deal with him on a regular basis and is a very close friend to both of us, not to mention the rest of the band now. He puts out great records and it was just a no brainer. It wasn't



most recently Alan and Hunter on guitars. Daniel and David have been playing in the band together since they were in high school. They have lived across the street from each other since they were born I think. The band used to be called Detonation and that got shortened to DTN and from there Down To Nothing came to be. The band really started doing stuff in 2003/04. That's when the first US tours and real stuff started happening and things got a little more real. Aside from a few splits and singles here and there we have released Save It For The Birds, Splitting Headache, The Most, and recently All My Sons. We're cool.

MM: Alright, you guys have a new record coming out on Reaper right? Want to tell us all about the new record...?

DTN: The record is called "All My Sons" and its six new songs recorded with our friend Jim Segal at The Outpost (Blood For Blood, Death Threat, Have Heart) in December of last year. I love the record and I think its the best stuff we've ever done.

MM: Okay, kind of following on from the above question, how did you guys end up hooking up with Reaper, and why did you make the move from Revelation?

until we were half way through recording that I sent Kitzel a text and told him "Yo we're in the studio recording...Lets do Reaper..". There was nothing to even talk about.

How do you think DTN has evolved, or changed as band and as people, between 'Save It For The Birds' and 'All My Sons'? Do you think that evolution, or change is necessary for a bands continued existence, or are change and evolution over-rated? Why?

DTN: That's a hard question to answer. We all pretty much grew up doing this band sort of. When I joined I was nineteen. I hadn't ever been anywhere and did it all with not a dollar in my pocket. This shit literally changed my entire life. The same goes for all of us. Ninety five percent of the travelling any of us did at the time, we did with the band and that shaped us in a lot of ways. We would tour eight or nine months out of the year and then go home and live together. There was honestly never a problem. That was five plus years ago now. I think the music and David's lyrics both show how we changed. Especially as of recently with the new seven inch. As far as any other bands it varies I suppose. I think there is a chemistry to all bands and everything works differently. Some bands get better by doing the same exact thing and others grow and are always evolving. That's what is cool about

music.

MM: Members of DTN have also played, and / or still play, with Terror, Trapped Under Ice, Heathens amongst others, and have appeared with, or been in a HUGE number of other bands...So, I was wondering, what do you guys get on a personal level from playing with, and in, so many other bands? Even though you do play with other bands, you guys always come back to DTN, so what do you get from being in Down To Nothing that you can't get in any other band?

DTN: David plays in Terror, I play in Trapped Under Ice, Hunter has Bracewar and Heathens, and aside from almost being a doctor you might catch Daniel with Cold World from time to time. I think we all love playing music with our friends. If all of our bands ended tomorrow it is more than likely that new ones are going to come from it. We keep doing the band because we like it and we don't want to quit yet. With this band we can do whatever we want. This isn't our last stand and we aren't running this into the ground. The band is the same there are just no standards to live up to now. More than half the shows were playing this year were playing for free. We don't need the money. We have all got other bands and jobs and school to worry about. We do this because we love it and we're chillin with our boys and nothing more.



MM: As you guys are from Richmond, a scene which seems to play host to a large number of HC (Municipal Waste, Avail etc.) and Metal (GWAR, Lamb Of God) bands, I wanted to know why you think so many bands come out of Richmond? What is about the town that helps promote and embody such a powerful scene?

DTN: People ask bands from here this all the time. I think it's because Richmond is so laid back. It's also one of the cheapest cities on the East Coast. I think it makes it easier for a "musician" lifestyle. It's hard to put your finger on it though. There are seriously amazing bands from this area. Richmond got soul.

MM: I read a quote on your MySpace page from Dave that said "There are still a lot of things to do, places to go and people to meet. We got that PMA", and I wondered if that was some sort of mission, or focus, for the band, getting to play as many different places as possible? Why? It almost seems like you've got that Black Flag mentality toward playing live and touring, that 'Get in the van and just go' attitude...Do you think that spirit of DIY fun and adventure is still alive and well in the HC scene, or has it died at the hands of cosseted bands and too-money men? Why?

DTN: At one point we were running at full speed. We we're going at it like nine or ten months out of the year and when we slowed down a lot of people were assuming that a last show was coming up. I guess that's fair but hon-

estly you don't have to be a full time band to exist. You don't have to do world touring if you don't want to. So I think that's what he was talking about. We wanna see more of the people we don't get to see like we used to. Keep making new friends. It's definitely a younger or newer band vibe and I see it in bands like Foundation, Naysayer, and Backtrack.

MM: What's the strangest thing that's happened to you guys while touring? You know, the most bizarre, way out there, odd experience....?

DTN: We were nearly arrested from trashing hotel rooms with Bane and when we tried to split we were surrounded by probably ten cop cars. The guy found out we were in a band and asked us if we know Agnostic Front. "That's my cousins!!". Another time our friend Chris was throwing un-opened cans of soda at signs in the desert. He stands up out of the window while we were going eighty miles an hour down the highway and the door comes up. I honestly thought he was dead. No one in the van said anything. He was hinged over the door where the window is at his waste and we had to pull him back in. I think we stopped fucking around for about a day after that.

MM: If music really is the food of love (although, you ask me, that sounds like hippie twaddle), what element of life and which emotion do

you think Down To Nothing embody in their music? Which emotion do you guys supply the soundtrack for and to? Why?

DTN: This band is definitely about fun. We have cancelled shows in the middle of tours to go swimming. We called the promoter and told him David got jumped by hippies and that we didn't know where he was or if he was alive. We caught some serious shit for stuff like that but it was just too nice of a day! HA. Almost every tour we have done we've taken days off to spend the entire day staring at the Grand Canyon or jump off some cliffs. We have literally kidnapped our friends and taken them on tour. We ghost ride, surf on, set off fireworks, and strap dead animals to the side of our van.

MM: Okay, what's next on the horizon for Down To Nothing? What are you guys going to be up to for the rest of 2010?

DTN: We play this shit by ear. We've got some festival appearances both East and West not to mention a weeks worth of shows with Terror, Grave Maker, Foundation, and Naysayer. Then we are hitting Europe AND THE UK for a month on the Hell On Earth Tour with Terror, Every Time I Die, All Shall Perish, The Acacia Strain, and Thick As Blood. Come out!!

MM: If there's anything that you'd like to add, I guess you should speak now or forever hold your peace...

DTN: Shout outs to Reaper Records, Naysayer, Foundation, Mother Of Mercy, Dead End Path, Bracewar, Terror, and GUERRILLA CREW!

ANDREW CULTURE

Conventional writing rules dictate that you should never start writing a column when you're in a bad mood, but as far as I'm concerned damn good stropy rants are the most entertaining, especially if the points are badly made and the arguments immature. So let's throw away wisdom and brotherly understanding and get started...

When I first stumbled upon the world of harshly opinionated crudity that we call the zineworld I fell in love instantly. As opposed to the horror glossies like Kerrapp and Metal Stammer zines were all about mates together having a laugh and getting excited about obscure music. I think the first zine I ever bought was called 'Poon Zombie' (my memory is vague to say the least), and

as I sat on the bus home agog at hastily drawn nude studies of Sandie Shaw and the multiple references to Paul Westerberg I realised I didn't understand a damn word of it. I knew that the gratuitous gravity defying pencil drawn breasts contained within this badly photocopied publication meant I would have to hide this immature publication from my religious parents, but I didn't yet realise that the non-nork related content was more dangerous to my closed little world than any of the misshapen mammaries the zinester chose to decorate every spare millimetre of white-space with. The NME at the time mocked punks for being leather jacketed gobbing imbeciles and The Young Ones cemented in my mind what it was to actually live as a punk. Needless to say I was somewhat put off. But time and time again what kept pulling me back to this zine (apart from the bountiful boob count) was that everyone looked like they were having so much fun. Unlike the misery guts Madchester bands that prevailed that period of my life these bands were messy, sloppy looking and looked like they were having the time of their life.

To save this column becoming yet another 'why I got into punk' borefest I'll get to my point – everything I read in zines gave me the feeling of inclusivity, a feeling that I could be a part of this world without fearing judgement or getting laughed at for wearing the wrong trainers. There was no look that everyone followed, there were no in-jokes that you had to be familiar with in order to enjoy the genre, and above all there was no hipster fucking snobbery. Yes, I'm afraid that while I'm not going to bore you with details of why I love punk and zines and am going to retreat that tired old path of ranting about hipsters. I told myself I'd never rant about anyone in the world of zines but good Jebus, have you seen these fucks?

So where has this spring of irritability sprung up from? I'll tell you (because if I didn't this column would be pointless) it comes from the one place that looked like it was going to cement the future of zines forever – the ZineFest. I'd like to say as a chicken shit caveat that I really appreciate folk that put on zinefests, and several of them really are my close personal friends and I don't have a problem with them, what I do have a problem with is the parasitic hoards who appear to have adopted the world of zines as their latest trend and newest way to get a leg up into god knows what career they're after.

On the whole these tight cardigan wearing NHS spectacle obsessing patent leather shoe shod trendy fools seem to be into only art zines. I noticed a few of them floating in and out of zinefests I was running stalls at a few years ago and smiled and prepared to welcome them into our celebration of creativity and cheap printing. A few of these hipsters starting running stalls at zinefests and I wished them well – zines don't have to just be about punk rock, they can be about any topic on earth. Then their number grew, and then so did the price of the 'wares' they were selling. Whereas us more traditional zinesters are putting out zines with word counts of tens of thousands and with cover prices of a quid, these folk were folding together what Luke from 'Ont' Road' zine once referred to as 'Colourful bits of card' and punting them out at a

fiver each. As ever there are very notable exceptions (hello Steve Larder, Edd Hours & Isy Morgenmuffel), but these exceptions have a larger connection to the world of punk rock, activism and anarchy than a few lines drawn in zines.

Over the years I have become increasingly anxious of these hipsters when they approach my distro table in search of something freaky or unusual in pen and ink. At of the recent ZineFests I did 90% of those present lifted the corner of zines on my table and if they saw writing they'd walk away. How could they be so sure that there wasn't content within that would rock the foundations of their world? Without wishing to sound too bitter - nah actually scratch that I probably AM bitter - I always thought zines were a small reflection of alternative lifestyles, not lifestyles in themselves. To give you an example I love regional zines like Norwich's fantastic 'Mild Peril'; they give you an insight into what's going on in another town and therefore promote their local scene and ultimately make folk want to go there. A felt tip scribbling of a man with his thumb up his arse having a wank isn't a zine, and just because you've drawn it on a torn off flap of a Campbell's soup box doesn't make it ironic. What's ironic is that your 'cool' friends seem prepared to gush about 'meaning' and passion without apparently having the slightest idea that everyone around them thinks they're a bunch of cunts!

Sadly I don't have any answers for this insidious disease of self obsessed so called expression, but I know I'm not the only person frustrated that a scene which is supposed to be so inclusive has become a living parody of everything that it should stand against. I love creativity in all its glorious forms but not at the cost of communication. The written word and the painted image was born of a powerful desire to communicate, not to make yourself look more scene than the rest of your cool mates.

Please don't let my moaning put you off going to zinefests – at any of the UK fests you'll find a gaggle of us punk zinesters sat in a corner formulating plans to bring back equilibrium, come join with us.

Andrew Culture
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Interview by Ian Pickens

MM: You guys must be one of the longest running, if not THE longest running punk band in France; Can you give us a quick history of the band? What does AS translate to.

Raf: There were two eras. First one with a drum machine, from 1988 to 1998, roughly. We only released demo tapes, songs on compilation tapes and CD, and a split 7" (live recordings) with French HC pioneers SCRAPS (in 1996). Then we got tired with the drum machine and we had our first drummer. At the same time we changed our male vocalist. The drummer only played on the split 7" with NEGATIVE IQ in 1999 (he was in both bands, as was the singer). After that we never went back to a drum machine. But we had several drummers, after him, well only 3 in fact. The line up changed from time to time, depending on members' availability and dedication. We recorded a 10", "Social Headache", in 2002. We had a change of drummer and it took us some time to record and release the following record, the "Barricades 1905" 7" EP, which was about the riots and strikes led by the workers in 1905 in Limoges. We took some time to work on more songs and released the "Syndrome de Stockholm" 12" (on white, clear and black vinyl) in 2009, with the "Barricades 1905" EP and other bonus tracks. In the meantime, we did a couple of tours and gigs in foreign countries, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Switzerland. On the last tour we played a show in Holland as well. We played squats, bars, bigger venues, wherever we could. Over the years, we've been lucky enough to share the stage with bands that are important to us, like D.O.A., Métal Urbain, Wunderbach, Raw Power, Sham 69, Ratos De Porao, Varukers, Oi Polloi, Hard-Ons, G.B.H. and many more. I consider it a huge honour. We also met a LOT of cool bands and people from the DIY scene, and that is another very important thing to us.

MM: Would you describe Attentat Sonore as an Oi band? You seem to play

that style of music but at the same time attack the more moronic macho elements of the genre in the song '(More Than) Boots and Braces?'

Raf: We're not an Oi band, and never claimed to be, really, but we had some influences in common with the Oi scene. We are some kind of missing link between scenes that don't mix usually, like the Oi, anarcho-punk and HC scenes.

We happen to have many friends in both these scenes. What we never supported is prejudice and stupidity, racism, sexism and such things. That was the purpose of this song you mentioned, not directed only to the Oi scene, though, but also to the "non-thinking punks", or anyone who would act stupidly during a gig.

MM: Your first release was the split with Negative IQ right?

Raf: Not really, we had a split 7" with French HC pioneers SCRAPS, from Lille, prior to this. But that was another era, when we were still playing with a drum machine. The first record with a drummer was indeed the split with Negative IQ. It was a joint release with them. It's been released a while ago, I think it is far from being great, but it helped us to move on at the time.

MM: Didn't you share a few of the same members?

Raf: Yes we did, we had the same drummer, and Ray was their singer before he joined the band to replace our original singer. We moved faster after that, although we had to change drummer before the "Social headache" 10" was recorded. We lost a lot of time while changing drummers, as they had to learn all the songs, and we had to get used to the new one.

MM: LOL, I know that feeling. The first time I came across the band was the 'Social Headache' 10" back in oh 2001/2002; Some of the tracks from that release were also released on the 'Limoges Punx' CD along with a few alternative tracks; was that CD a summary of the band up to that point?

Raf: The "Limoges Punx" CD was only an appetizer between "Social Headache" and our next release. In fact we had released 50 copies of this CDR cos we had two important gigs, one with the UK Subs, and one with Conflict



so we had figured out it would be smart to have something for sale. We did the CDR with two friends who were visiting us at the time, Josh from Upstart Productions, and his brother Steve. We had painted the CDR with stencils and all. It was fun. I didn't even keep a copy for myself, which surprises me as I am kind of an archivist.

MM: I noticed you covered the Partisans 'No U-Turns' on the 10" and the Oppressed's 'Work Together' on the CD; you seem to have a passion for Welsh Oi bands?

Raf: Ah yeah, I never had thought about this, but you have a point here. Actually, the Oppressed had been played on a local radio show when I was in high school, and I had this song (I found out much later that it was "Urban Soldiers") on a tape, I used to listen to it over and over again, as well as other punk, new wave and weird pop stuff from the same show. I figured out later that the DJ was Welsh and teaching English at the Limoges University I went to a couple of years later! Small world! He is in his sixties now. And fucking retired! Lucky bastard! Well I think this tape made me part of what I am today! About the Partisans, a band I love too, we had been offered to cover one of their songs on a tribute 7", in the US, but it never happened. So we decided to use the song on our 10" instead. "No U Turns" is a great song, and we love all of their records, to be honest. Great band. Another band we like from Wales is Rejected, ex-In The Shit. We helped a little to release their 1st LP, actually, on our label Guerilla Vinyl!

MM: Like you say Small World, I used to go to shows with those guys in TJs in Newport. What other bands have influenced your style/politics/music?

Raf: A lot of bands could be considered as influential, but on the other hand I can't think of any who'd have changed our sound or lyrics style. First influences were Metal Urbain, and the '77 Punkrock bands like Gasoline, Guilty Razors, Olivensteins etc. Not forgetting the British bands like the Ruts and Sex Pistols. But also faster bands like Discharge and the early So Cal bands from the Rodney On the ROQ compilation LP series. At the time we had a drum machine. Later we were influenced by Anarcho Punk bands like Conflict, CRASS, Crucifix, and early hardcore bands like Minor Threat, Dead Kennedys, and many more. Also street punk and Oi! bands from the 80's, mostly, with the exception of the Wretched Ones and Oxblood. Lyrics wise, we always tried to have a say without preaching, maybe at the beginning this aim was not really achieved, but for over than 10 years now, we try to mix social / political lyrics with a pinch of derision.

MM: The lyrics are obviously an important part of Attentat Sonore; what inspires you and do you find it difficult putting your ideas across in English as it's your second language?

Raf: Yes, the lyrics are very important to us. We write either in English or French, it depends on the topics, the things we want to express, the ideas, the words which are ready to spring off our sick minds. But writing in English sure is something different. Some bands (in France) think it is easier to write in English, maybe cos most of the people will not read or understand their lyrics. I don't think so, at least if you care about what you want to express. We try our best to write decent lyrics in English... or in French!

MM: It's nice to see a band sing in their native language; does it annoy you that so many punk bands reject that and only sing in English?

Raf: Sometimes yes, particularly when the lyrics are dumb or would not mean anything in French! What's the use, then? Read the phonebook instead, it would be as interesting as what they're doing, i.e. trying to hide their lack of inspiration behind a foreign language. Seriously, using a language that everybody in the audience will understand exposes a band to critics if they fail at writing meaningful or interesting lyrics. So using English seems like taking a smaller risk (they think).

MM: Why do you think France has been relatively neglected in both the international music world in general but also in punk rock?

Raf: Maybe cos we had too many pompous people in the bands, and greedy people in the music business, I don't know? Many great bands didn't do much cos they were out of touch with the reality of the scene. Or cos it was too complicated to organize gigs or self manage bands. Particularly in the late 70's and early to mid-80's. I'm not speaking of ourselves as we were not there as a band, at this time, but that's what the history of French rock and punk tell. But same goes with the rest of the music. Too many lousy self centered singers imitating American crooners!

MM: The 'Barricades 1905' ep saw the sound of the band change a little, a bit 'heavier, more hardcore sounding; was this a natural development of the band because of your passion for US hardcore bands?

Raf: I am not sure, the songs ain't that fast, are they? We always had fast songs

and mid tempo songs, in fact, maybe that's the selection on this 7" which makes you think that? We like short songs. It's usual for us to write 1 minute to 2 minutes songs. Long songs bore us to death! It is difficult to answer this, really, as we have fast songs as well as punkrock songs. Mixing both is our pleasure!

MM: That was the first release that Murielle sang on right?

Raf: Yes it was her first recording ever. It was still very new for her to sing in a band. We worked even harder on the "Syndrome de Stockholm" songs!

MM: Why did Marie leave the band?

Raf: Marie had 2 kids, and has three now. She was not up for going on the road, playing anywhere, having to practice etc. Maybe she was tired with our way of life as well. She is living with Loulou our ex-bass player, so it was kinda logical that they would stop at the same time? After all these years, it was sad to see them go, but we moved on, and we retaliated, I guess. No hard feelings.

MM: You guys also put on most of the punk shows that happen in Limoges right?

Raf: Well, most of it, maybe say 60%. There is another collective called Solitude Urbaine which organizes Street punk, Ska and Oi! shows mostly from the antifa scene. There is a feminist collective (newer). And a couple of people who do the odd gig. Professional gig organizers and venues don't book many punk shows by themselves. So it's up to us to do the right thing, but it's tough cos there is no alternative place here. Still, we have booked shows here since 1994.

MM: Have you noticed any big changes in promoting shows over the past 10-15 years? Is it harder now that it used to be, do you get reasonable turnouts for the shows? Are there less international touring bands now than there used to be?

Raf: I'd say there are more international bands on tour, but less of the bigger bands as they work with more professional booking agencies and they want higher guarantees. Audiences tend to shrink; unfortunately, it is difficult to bring a lot of people to the same gig now! But sometimes it is enough if you can gather 50 people at a DIY gig on a week day, it depends on the venues! We need a smaller club, though.

MM: Which has been your favourite show that you have promoted? And your least?

Raf: Some have been some kind of let down in terms of audience, such as the small crowd which came to see the first EVER French show for Raw Power; or the last D.O.A. gig, on a Sunday night, it was a bit of a crazy bet, and the audience was small, but well, both shows were memorable! Another one that I kinda regret was Bill Bondsmen's, from Detroit. It was my birthday party and I was drunk so early that I passed out at the middle of their show. I was ashamed the following day (and still am). They played a great show, but I only remember an obnoxious Raf screaming in the mics during a Negative Approach cover! And worse... Great shows... there have been lots of them, Witch Hunt, the Cute Lepers were the last two we organized at the WBB, which has closed in January. Avengers here in Limoges was a kind of dream coming true. The Lower Class Brats played some excellent gigs as well. Oi Polloi were great, with a really packed venue. Good, as it was the first time an anarchopunk band had brought such a wide audience here.

MM: You also do a Distro and a radio show too right?

Raf: Yes, I've been doing the distro for over 20 years now. It became more important 3 and a half years ago when we opened a DIY store here for records and books, new stuff as well as second hand, some shirts and clothes, too. It works OK, and it allows us to spread the words and music further! It is called Under-sounds. The radio show has existed for several years. In fact there were two different ones: the first one, "Panik!" started in 1989 and it was on another station, and we got fired after 12 years of service, cos they didn't like rock anymore (in fact they fired us for these stupid reasons a couple of months before rock music and guitars came back in every radio hit...). Then, after a one year hiatus, or so, we started "Emergency" with two other members of the band, Ray and Murielle, but Ray had to stop this year cos of his job and child. Radio is a very important medium, I think, and in my personal history it played a huge role.

MM: You guys must be pretty busy?

Raf: You're right. Time is our Number One problem. All of us have jobs and various things to manage all the week long, so it is difficult to find time to go on tour and all. We also manage a practice space for 5-6 bands, the one we have used for many years now. I had to stop the zine a couple of years ago; I had too much to do. That's about the only thing I really stopped over the years! Still, we're all happy to gather at our practice space (freezing cold on winter, too hot on summer!) and to work on the songs, to play it and to have fun!

MM: The political and DIY aspects of punk seem to be the most important to you as a person and As a band; do you feel that punk has lost that side of things too much?

Raf: I don't know, it seems to disappear then to reappear somewhere in another form. I used to be a bit disappointed about this issue, a couple of years ago, and the situation is probably worse today, but there are people involved all around, and nothing is impossible, it seems. Even squats... and autonomous centres. So many bands are releasing records the DIY way. And touring... maybe it is not THAT dead.

MM: Why have you stuck with punk?

Raf: I guess it's like my whole life. Not that I am living off it, but living with it, and FOR it! It brought and still brings me the best in life, music, friends, creativity, a mean of expression, a way to struggle, and everything that counts in life! No other music style can bring so much, I think; it is a whole culture and way of life.

MM: Tell us a little about your latest release 'Stockholm Syndrome', that's

a situation where a hostage starts to empathise with their captor right?

Raf: Yes, exactly. It inspired me this song. It's not really about a situation like a bank robbery with hostages or something; it's more like a metaphor about the whole system. Who's the captor? Who's the hostage? Aren't we like hostages of this system, collaborating to it, defending it while it hurts all of us? I like this kind of topics, dual meanings, you know. I think it is a more original and maybe interesting approach, even if there could be some kind of misinterpretation.

MM: What's next for AS?

Raf: Hopefully a split 7" EP with M.D.C. We recorded it a while ago, now, artwork is ready – we're waiting for their new recording. They've been pretty busy releasing a split album with RESTARTS, and other 4 way split 7". So the new songs went there, as these records were planned first. Can't wait to hear their new stuff! After that, well we hope to finish writing and recording more new songs, and releasing a new 12"! Maybe we'll record the Poison Idea cover we play on stage for a while... Thanx for your support and interest! Long live to the zines, webzines or old school ones!





I recently dropped in on an old friend of mine for an afternoon chat, hoping to get the latest scoop on a soon to be released CD based on the Ed Wood masterpiece, Plan Nine From Outer Space. That's right, I said — Plan Nine From Outer Space. In fact, the entire project is a two-hour musical extravaganza written in the style of an old-time radio show. As wild as that may sound, it truly is a well-crafted musical with songs that range from straight ahead rock and roll, to soulful ballads and all styles in-between. Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself. The aforementioned

MM: So how did you and Doug originally hook-up?

Kleebee: Well, I started off as Doug's soundman back in the 1970's. His band Silverlode was playing the club scene. So, the first night, the band asked me how it sounded, and I said, "well... you could do this, this and that." The next thing I knew, the soundman was running lights, and I was running sound. Anyway, Doug was fine with that idea. Later on, I had my own band, and when a few guys split for the Southern States, I called Doug



friend just so happens to be the co-creator of PNRS, David F. Kleeberger (Kleebee). Over the years, Dave and his business partner, Doug Crill, have been involved in various musical projects but none can compare to this feat.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Dave's work, he is perhaps one of the most creative blokes that I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. Not only is he a bassist extraordinaire, but he is also a sculptor, recording engineer, playwright and cartoonist. One of his most unique creations is a cartoon character known as "Kleebee's Geebees."

You won't find much information about Mr. Kleeberger for the simple fact – that there isn't much. Dave is a very private individual, who prefers to remain in the shadows, rather than in the limelight. It is because of this fact that his accomplishments have not been noticed. When I became aware of his involvement with the Plan Nine project, I immediately contacted him for an opportunity to discuss the intricacies of such a monumental undertaking. On this particular afternoon, Kleebee was busy mastering some of the musical arrangements from the project in his state-of-the-art-home studio. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to hear the results. After the session, he and I retreated from the studio, to the comfort of his expansive living room in front of a roaring fire (the fire being inside a fireplace, of course). It was in this peaceful setting that I learned a lot more about the project and his personal involvement in the entire process.

and said, "I need a vocalist, lets jam." He brought a guitar player with him, and we rocked a lot of college bars. Doug is extremely talented in the whole creation process but his voice; this guy is nuts, polished and always in-key. He's a great front man, and he has superb control of the English language...that's not to say he doesn't abuse it from time to time. To this day, I never really know what he is going to say or do. Doug is ten years my senior, although our age difference really doesn't matter. But twenty-five years ago, a young guy could learn a lot from hanging around established musicians, if he paid attention. I paid attention, now I'm doing what I want to do, when I want to do it. How great is that?

MM : So have you guys always been together?

Kleebee : No. We have always been close. I raised my children with my wife, and Doug was busy writing books, after he married Dorothy. We worked on some comic books together. Zombie Hit Men was one we published, which sold fairly well. In fact, many celebrities had endorsed the comic. Celebs such as: Alice Cooper, Elvira, make-up genius Tom Savini and other members from The Night of the Living Dead movie. Anyway, I would see Doug, now and then, at some of the great parties that he and his wife Dorothy gave at their beautiful mansion. I say mansion because it was this very large home once owned by one of Toledo's early lumber moguls, quite exquisite. The home was a part of Toledo's historical Old West End. Then he lost Dorothy to cancer.... she was an absolutely incredible girl. It was about two years after he had lost her; when I called him up to discuss the



possibility of working together on some projects. I was worried about him and, since he had moved, I had to look him up. Anyway, I discovered that Doug had moved just about a half of mile from my house. After a quick catch up session, we decided to go right to work on Plan Nine Radio Show, again.

MM : Again...?

Kleebee: Yes...back in 1986 or so, we started writing a musical version of the 1959 Movie Plan 9 From Outer Space. We tried to get the rights to it, but they were being held for Tim Burton and a cabaret group out of New York. Burton was working on Ed Wood with Johnny Depp, and someone else was making a musical on the East Coast. So we shelved it. About a year ago, I told Doug that Plan 9 was going to go public domain. As a result, he and I agreed to pick up where we had left off back in '86, and we've been going strong ever since.

MM: What do you and Doug do as performers?

Kleebee: As far as Plan Nine goes, we both write lyrics and music. Doug sings lead on about five of the eighteen songs. I write most of the musical narrative pieces with Doug's blessing, of course. I program drums, play bass guitar and do much of the structuring on keyboards. When we have a suitable song, I bring in the big guns to play guitar and drums. We also have a dozen vocalists who play the various roles on the project. Our goal is to recreate Plan Nine as a musical radio show, similar to the programs of yesteryear.

MM: So who are the other members of the ensemble?

Kleebee: My son Kyle plays the drums...the guy is an absolute animal on the instrument. I would have to say that he is perhaps one of the heaviest drummers in the business. It's really a thrill to play alongside of him. But that's not all...he is a metronome when it comes to timing...never fluctuates the tempo. His friend Tim Strausbaugh is a gifted guitarist, who tears it up on the solos. Besides Doug, the other vocalists are: Doug Rahe, Rob Hawk from the band Bath House Bertha, Courtney Altenberg, Mark Taylor, Lora Phiels, Jim Nowak and Ron Schultz. Ray Schmidt does some piano work. There are several other bit characters, here and there.

MM: What equipment and instruments do you favor most?

Kleebee : Software: Apple Logic 9 for Plan 9, what else? The greatest thing to manipulate music, and it works with Final Cut Pro for video editing, too. Keyboards: Roland Fantom G and an old Roland U-110. Logic 9 also has a

host of keyboard synth and piano sounds that are out of this world. Guitars: I play a Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion, and I use my son Tyler's Telecaster. However, I bring in Tim Strausbaugh, and he plays a Fender Strat, Gibson Firebird and a Paul Reed Smith, depending on the song and style. My son Kyle plays a set of Risen Drums. Basses: I have a few including an old Ibanez Roadstar II and also a few that I've built over the years. One guitar in particular is a fretless bass made from old Rickenbacker parts. I also have a Rickenbacker as well as a seven string bass that my son, Kyle, got me from Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam. Currently, I'm building a couple of basses that I've carved out of a solid piece of Honduran Mahogany.

MM : Musically, what else do you guys have planned?

Kleebee: We're putting the finishing touches on Plan 9 Radio Show, of course, but there are some interesting things just around the corner. I can tell you that our comic book *Zombie Hit Men* is on the schedule, and the other projects...I can't comment on them just yet.

MM: On the CD cover you guys call yourselves – Flex the Echo. What's up with that?

Kleebee: Flex the Echo is a band that Doug and I have created. The band is designed to enable us to write and explore different music with other musicians and artists in the studio... to reach a broader range of a finished product. It's much the same as Steely Dan. Steely Dan is always Donald Fagan and Walter Becker; however, they also bring in other musicians, from time to time, which make the end result quite interesting. That's the formula for Flex the Echo, and it works well.

MM: So when will Plan Nine be released?

Kleebee: As far as for public consumption, it will depend on "first considerations" in Hollywood. For various reasons, I can't say too much other than that. However, I can say that not only will it be released as a CD, but also the entire project has the potential to be done as either a movie or a stage play. Our target date is to have the CD finished and in the hands of our Hollywood connection by Halloween of this year.

MM: Anything else you like to add?

Kleebee: All I can say is that I am very blessed; I have a wonderful family, great friends, and the opportunity to work on various projects with Doug. Other than that, life is good.

BRIAN POSEHN

It's a given that as a species, we all see ourselves as individuals, yet follow our basic biological urge to gather in tribal and social groups, identifying ourselves on wider scale with the title that the social grouping or tribe has been tagged with, and conforming to the behavioural patterns that have been established within the "tribe". As each tribe grows, occasionally a figurehead or spokesman appears, a leader figure without power, one with whom all the members of said tribe can identify. For those of us lucky enough to be members of the mid thirties thrashers who are sort of settled down and still enjoy shows, comic books and other assorted "fringe" activities, Brian Posehn is the man. Hell, the guy is so damn funny, he's broken through the tribal boundaries and even "normal" folks dig him, and when the chance to speak to El Hefe was offered, I rose to the challenge. All hail the leader, we love the leader...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

MM: How did you hook up with Relapse? It's kind of unusual for a comedian to be on a metal label.

Brian: Yeah. I don't know if you're familiar with a comedian called David Cross, he's an old friend of mine, he and some other comedians I know went on a whole variety of labels including Sub Pop and that kind of stuff. So when I did my record, I self produced it and decided to go to a label – right away I knew I wanted to go to a metal label straight away so I had a short list which I gave to my manager who also spoke to the indie rock labels who weren't really interested because they new that I was going to be recording music with Scott Ian, so it was going to be metal in the way it sounded. Before he could even get to the list, Relapse got wind that I was going to be in Philadelphia and asked if we could have a meeting. This guy really impressed me, he started the label up basically from his garage. I really liked what they did and the kind of bands they put out.



MM: How did you get your initial start in comedy?

Brian: I was 19 or 20 and I had a couple of friends who told me I should give it a shot. I'd never even been in a comedy club at that point. The one thing that I could do at that age was to write jokes, so I looked on it as doing research because I couldn't go in a comedy club until I was 21. So the week I turned 21, I went straight down to the comedy club and did the 5 minutes I had been working on and just had a blast. The second time I completely hated –but then still loved it.

MM: Which is tougher: doing standing up or doing TV and films?

Brian: I think stand up is harder, typically. Whenever I talk to actors about stand up they all are amazed that I do it as it's seen by everybody as one of the toughest things you can do, because you're putting yourself out there. When you're acting it's not as personal, there are lots of other people involved. But with stand up it's just you. If it sucks you suck.

MM: Which was cooler for you: Being in the Devil's rejects or being in the video for What doesn't die?

Brian: That's a good question! They're both pretty cool. I've pretty much got to live the metal dream, I'm very lucky. I liked the rejects, it's always been my dream to be in a horror film – you get to kill or be killed.

MM: What's the most metal thing that has ever happened to you?

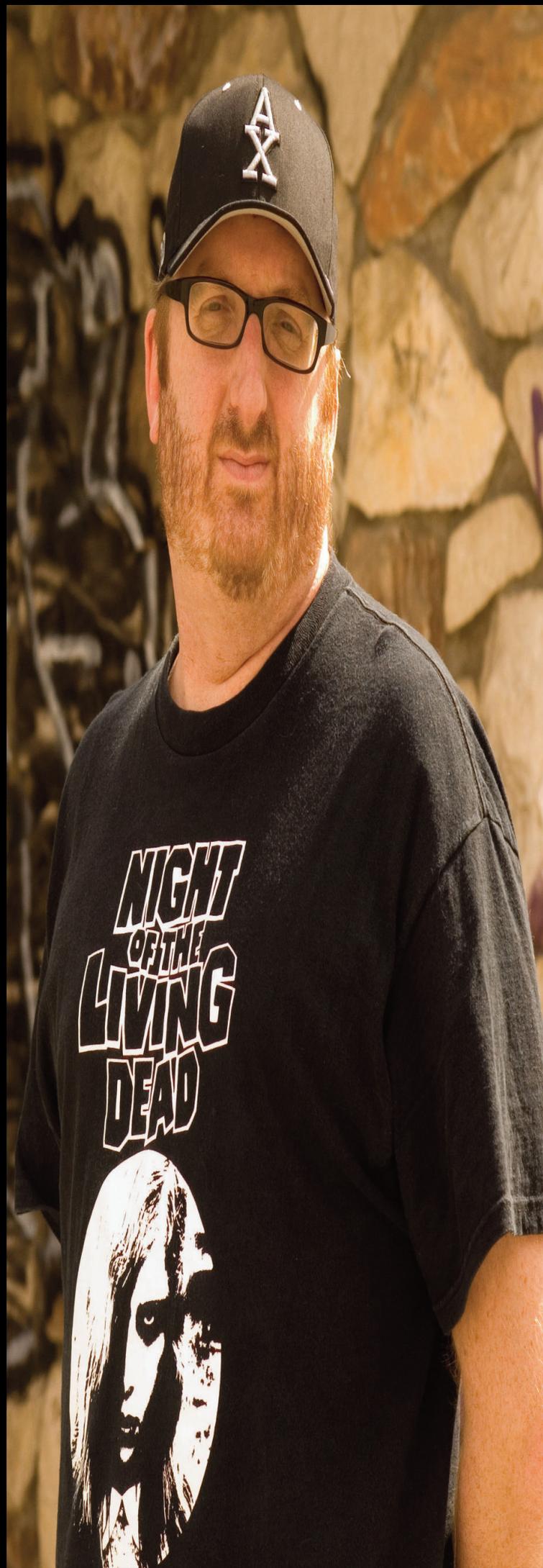
Brian: The most metal? Getting to be involved with the Revolver awards out here in the States, and doing the Golden Gods, getting to host one year. I think it was probably the first year I hosted because I got to meet Dio, and we actually did a bit for the TV show at my house with Dio and Scott Iain and loads of others. Even though Scott has been my friend for a while, it's still surreal because I used to be an Anthrax fan when I was a kid and then I get to have Dio come to my house!

MM: Why Short Round? Why did you name your number one boy after a small Oriental Sidekick?

Brian: Just because it's silly (laughing). That's the kind of thing that makes me laugh. When I thought of calling my penis short round it made me laugh out loud. That's how something makes it into the act. If it makes me laugh it's got to be worth doing.

MM: Does shouting Slayer really make it okay?

Brian: (laughing) Its the same thing really. It's so ridiculous that it just made me laugh when I came up with that concept and people seem to love it. It's a joke that really does well, and it's a joke that does well for people who don't even know Slayer because it's so surreal. What I love is that Slayer fans re-



ally don't get it – they think I'm taking the piss out of them and saying they're gay, but Slayer is so very far from gay that the idea that if you perform a gay act but scream Slayer when you're doing it somehow makes it not gay is so ridiculous.

MM: Why "Fart & Weiner Jokes" Brian? Why call the album that?

Brian: It's just something that was funny to me as a kid, and it's always gonna be funny to me. The record is more than that, but calling it Fart Weiner and releasing this material it's just a cool joke. Fart & Weiner jokes just rolls off the tongue. The last record I named Nerd Rage after one of the jokes; so I was going through the record, looking at what the joke titles were and one of the things that I say at the start of the show is that I don't consider myself to be only low-brow, I do a mixture of smart and crucially dumb. I kind of tell myself to lower their expectations as all that's coming is a load of fart and weiner jokes – which isn't entirely true but it's a way of letting people know what to expect and I think the album title does the same thing: opening the show by saying "If you like fart and weiner jokes - this is for you"!

MM: Your show is really open, frank and at times brutal. Is there anything that you consider taboo?

Brian: Yeah, there are topics – I'm trying to think about topics that I just wouldn't touch. I guess for me, I don't really talk about politics and religion much because that's just not what I like to do. I like to shock people a little bit with the dirtiness, but I really don't want to alienate people. I used to talk about religion – I did a joke on my last album about it, but I prefaced it, I mean just bringing it up you're gonna lose half the audience. I'm not in comedy to offend people I just like to have fun. So I guess those two things are the things I tread lightly around purely because they're not my thing.

MM: You mention comic books on your record and seeing as you co-wrote the Last Christmas for Image, are you planning to go back to write more comic books?

Brian: For sure. I've been working on a concept for a while with the same guy that I wrote the other book with, my buddy Jerry – he wrote a really great book for image last year called Horizon. He and I are working on a super hero book. It's the kind of thing that would be on-going not just a 4 or 5 book story arc. We'd love to get a book going for Image comics where we work on it for a couple of years, so we're working on the idea. But it's a tough thing because with Image you have to put up your own money, and there isn't really any money in comic books so we've got other things going on. I don't know how comic book riders take on more than one volume in one month, it's a hell of a lot of work.

MM: All comic book guys are always Marvel or DC. Which are you?

Brian: I'm a weird guy. Even as a kid I didn't make that choice. My first two heroes that I was really into were Batman and Spiderman. They were my two favourites. I have a ton of Marvel, I have a ton of DC I don't think it really matters. I've always loved them equally – I love their history and keep up with both of them currently. It's like – being a metal head and all that, that's not all I listen to too: sure I was wearing a Testament T-Shirt in the '80s but I was also listening to the Pixies. I've always been that guy. I've never just got into one thing and gone "this is it! This is all I am!"

MM: What bugs you about the phrase "Party like a rock star"? Why is it so annoying?

Brian: I just don't like when people repeat stuff – I'm a writer, I don't like anybody just repeating a cliché whether it's "talk to the hand" or "don't go there" or any of those phrases that become popular in language. They've just always annoyed me and that's what it all about. I mean, "party like a rock star is so lame" people go to Vegas and use it as an excuse to be really gross and behave like animals and think it's okay. It's the same with "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" kind of an excuse to be a scumbag, but you are using this "clever" phrase – except it's not clever because somebody else thought it up and it's been regurgitated a thousand times. Things like that really annoy me.

MM: Is night digging ever acceptable? And if so, under what circumstances?

Brian: (laughing) Yeah if you have a lot of property and nobody can see you. It's one of those things that when I was thinking about things that I just can't do because of my size and because of the way I look and it just really made me laugh. The idea of my neighbour looking over the fence and seeing me digging; he would alert a constable.

MM: How did you get the Abracadabra Doo voiceover gig?

Brian: That was really cool, it was just one of those things. I did an audition and they said “would you be interested in playing a villain in Scooby Doo?” I just said “well.. YES” – it’s just one of those iconic things. Growing up here with Scooby Doo that’s one of the cartoons I was into when I was very little, and the villains always the best part with the “I’ll get you” so I had to do it.

MM: As a self confessed “nerd”, what does the term mean to you?

Brian: Nerd, geek and dork are all kind of interchangeable. For me it’s just about being obsessed with something, loving what I love and being into something in a way that other people don’t get. Other people have hobbies, nerds have obsessions. By calling yourself a nerd you are accepting who you are.

MM: Does Wikipedia ever get it right or is it always wrong?

Brian: (laughs) All wrong. I left a thing up there that said I was a classical piano, I love putting it all up.. I do a lot of radio when I’m on tour, I go on the morning shows to promote my show when it comes into town and one said “so.. do you play a little classical piano” it was so funny. So don’t believe everything you read.

MM: How do you feel about Hecklers and what’s the best heckle you ever had?

Brian: I’m lucky in that I don’t get heckled a lot. I had one recently, a guy in Chicago just laughing at the wrong stuff and it was just wrong so it really

threw me off my rhythm. He threw me for a second because it was so weird. I’m very lucky, I get the kind of heckles that when you talk to them later I call them helpers because that’s what they always think they are doing. They’re having a blast they love you and they just want to get involved and participate. That Slayer sketch we were talking about earlier is a classic example. You’ll find that long after that joke is over, people will continue to shout out Slayer for the next hour. They think they are being funny or helping.

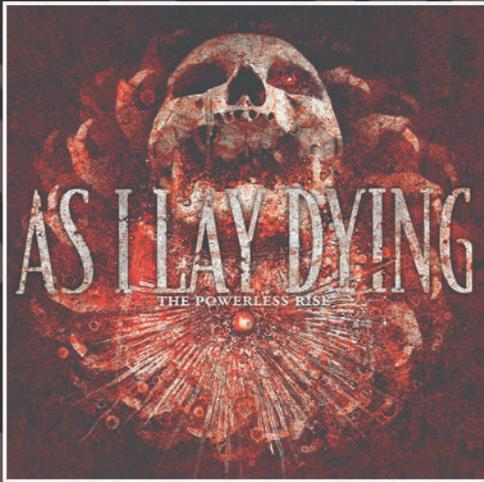
MM: How’s the album gone down so far?

Brian: Getting a good response from people. I was number one comedy record on Billboard which didn’t happen last time. I had a good couple of first weeks and people will hopefully continue to check it out. The video will be out soon then I will be touring with the live show and hopefully people will check it out.

MM: So what’s next for you Brian?

Brian: I think I’m doing Knebworth, which I think will be the greatest thing I’ve ever done. It will be wholly British comics except for me. It’s certainly going to be an experience. Do you really want your first time over there to be a gig like that? I mean wouldn’t it be better to be over there and do a couple of comedy clubs first to get to know the audience and make it more conducive to comedy instead of turning up cold in front of 10,000 metal heads. Although I feel like I have metal head love but that only gets you two minutes before people start shouting “You suck”...





AS I LAY DYING
THE POWERLESS RISE



EVERGREEN TERRACE
ALMOST HOME



UNEARTH
THE MARCH



THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER
DAWN OF REPRISAL

SHAI HULUD
MISANTHROPY/PURE



MALEFICE
DAWN OF REPRISAL



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Distributed by



IT RUINED MY LIFE...

It seems like a dream now, but the effects are so real. It was my drummer Al's birthday, we all went to 'Tattoo The Planet' at Wembley to celebrate. A bunch of bands were playing, Cradle of Filth, Therapy?, Raging Speedhorn and Slayer. We were drinking all day and there was hardly any food on offer. I remember I was wearing this corset which could have contributed to events-it's a mystery. We ended up backstage, delighted to find Slayer had left us an untouched fridge full of beer-we'd scored! The following day I had these weird stomach pains. We had a gig in Chelmsford and I set the pain aside mentally to get on with the job. Next day it worsened and a trip to the doctor left me worse off, sent home with a hand full of indigestion tablets and 'it

being told I can't do something. But from this point onward slowly and steadily my life turned around. I became healthier, more responsible, with more energy and respect for the abilities I have. I got some high profile session work, which funded the first Die So Fluid album. I had to face the 'real me', and the fears and anxieties alcohol helps you run away from. I have a huge respect now for anyone who kicks a serious habit, especially when it's their own choice, it's the toughest thing and it takes guts. I wasn't an alcoholic, but I binged. You actually get an insight into what it's like to be discriminated against when you constantly deal with the peer pressure of drinking, people get shitty with you, particularly in the Europe, when you



will help if you smile' It will help if I punch you in the balls! Haha. So, next day sees me writhing in agony, bed ridden, barely able to walk, extremely begrudgingly we had to call off the next few gigs. We thought maybe I'd pulled a stomach muscle or been poisoned. It felt like knives twisting in my back and stomach.

Eventually Al took me to A & E in the van. I sat there a couple of hours shaking but soon as the blood test came back they shoved an oxygen mask on me. That was when I knew it was serious! They gave me a painkiller and as it kicked in they told me I had pancreatitis. Everything became surreal, especially when they said I might die. I was hooked up to a drip, nil by mouth for about a week. You just have to wait it out, it could go either way, and there's no 'cure' as such. My attack was caused by an excess of alcohol, a reaction where enzymes get trapped so that you digest your own stomach. The doctors told me I should stop drinking all together because they couldn't predict what amount would spark up the process again.

I won't lie, it sucked big time. I liked drinking. Suddenly I was confronted with my own mortality and I was forced to re evaluate my whole life. I hate

turn down a drink. In LA, where I now live it's more respected. I've become more forthright and I don't care what people think. It's their problem if they're offended. That spills over into other areas of life, I see individuality as a strength, It makes me different and it's who I am. Sure I've had weak moments, some of which have made me sick. I do a lot less embarrassing and dangerous things, or if I do them, I don't fuck them up! Generally I'm happier, less paranoid, more confident that maybe I have something to offer as a person.

It felt like it ruined my life, but it was a blessing in disguise, and I feel grateful I have time left to experience more of this crazy planet, and a chance to create something worthwhile before I finally pop my clogs. I would say it's an ongoing battle, and that fuels the ethos of the band to a large degree. We overcome together.

~ Grog x
(Die So Fluid)

DIE SO FLUID

AUDIOBOOK REVIEWS

Brian Posehn - Fart And Wiener Jokes (Relapse) CD

Pretty spot and deliciously crude stand up comedy from the 6'6" man giant and self confessed stoner / metalhead Brian Posehn (A.K.A 'The Sasquatch of Comedy'). 'Fart and Wiener Jokes', Brian's second stand up album on the Relapse label (It's predecessor being 'Live In: Nerd Rage') does exactly what it says on the tin... i.e. lots and lots of fart and weiner jokes + more in the form of an original song; aptly named 'More Metal Than You' and a cover of Kenny Roger's 'The Gambler. Simultaneously side splittingly funny and cringe inducingly uncomfortable Brian treats the listener to his anecdotal musing; for example his favourite hobbies... smoking weed, playing XBOX, masturbating and crying! How getting a blow job from a male friend (or more aptly a bro-job) isn't gay as long as you shout "SLAYER!"... Nothing is left to the imagination with Brian Posehn's style of self deprecating comedy, my favourites were... "I look like I'm made of farts" and "Baby Jesus made me look Rapey". I'd seen Brian Posehn previously as the geeky metal fan come touring country musician on Rob Zombies 'Devils Reject', he even manages to fit in a few great lines before getting brutally murdered and having his face hacked off! I had no idea of the persona behind the bit part however and this particular review entry has been a great introduction to his comedy! If you like stand up and love metal... but hate all the bullshit the so called 'scene' throws in your face you'll love Brian Posehn. "SLAYER!!!!" ...**Ioan**

Doctor Who: City Of Spires – Starring Colin Baker, Frazer Hines, Georgia Moffet, Richard Earl, James Albrecht, Russell Floyd - Written by Simon Bovey (Big Finish Productions –) 2xCD / Download

Every Doctor Who fan has a list of favourite, and loathed, companions, and any devotee who tries to tell you different is lying. Big, fat, hairy lies that feed the flies. Thing is, some fans, for reasons that are beyond my understanding, like to keep their favourites a secret, whilst others, such as myself, are open and honest about such things, and that's why I'll happily tell you, that for me, the four companions who best embody everything that Who is, and should be, about are Liz Shaw, Jo Grant, Sarah Jane Smith and Jamie McCrimmon. Why, you may be asking, have I brought this up now? It isn't, contrary to what some people will tell you, that I've gone completely mental, and if you'll bear with me for just a couple of seconds longer, you'll see how it ties into 'City Of Spires'. See, this is the story that reunites the (Sixth) Doctor and Jamie, that flings them both into the open maw of adventure once more, and it's one that I've been rabidly looking forward to for the last three months. Was it worth my frenzied anticipation? Oh yes, most decidedly so. 'City Of Spires' finds the Sixth Doctor back in the Highlands, arriving in the middle of a pitched battle between a Clan and Redcoats, and within ten minutes of starting, sees him reunited with Jamie, now calling himself Black Donald and leading the fight against the English. So far, so good, looks like we're in for a Historical romp par excellence, so I settled down and readied myself, but then things started getting weird. Very, very weird, but good weird like the best episodes of the first couple of 'Twilight Zone' series, not bad weird like the bus journey you spent sat next to the nutter who insisted that he was in the intelligence services despite having a body odour problem and ill fitting clothes. Weird as in pump jacks appearing two centuries before they're supposed to, the local populations being subdued by Red Caps, the murderous beats of folklore who aren't exactly part of the sprite and fairy tradition, the appearance of legendary Highland hero's who should have died nearly half a century before, mechanisation and technology that's far too advanced for the time period and a mysterious Overlord, who on the evil-villain-o-meter, scores a whopping great ten, and why doesn't Jamie have any memory of meeting the Doctor? Oh yes, it's good, very good, and I wish I could tell you more without spoiling it, but I can't, and with the cast delivering incredible performances, and the sound chaps and engineers creating a hugely believable landscape of sound that lets you effortlessly recreate the Highlands of the period in your minds eye, or at least how you imagine them to have been, and having listened to the tale four times in row, I can honestly state, hand on heart, that 'City Of Spires' has raised the bar for Big Finish once more. Roll on 'Wreck Of The Titan' (in which we'll hopefully get some answers to the questions that were left unanswered in 'City'), because if it's even half as good as this opening story of the Jamie / Sixth Doctor trilogy, it'll be bloody brilliant... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who – Daleks: Mission To The Unknown – Written by John Peel & Read by Peter Purves & Jean Marsh (BBC Audiobooks) 5xCD

For those of you not "in the know", 'Daleks: Mission To The Unknown' is the first half of the absolutely HUGE (notice the capitalisation to accentuate the fact that it really was, well, huge) First Doctor Serial 'The Daleks Masterplan', which ties the one part 'Mission To The Unknown' together with the first half of the fore mentioned '...Masterplan'. All told, the story, including the one shot 'Mission To The Unknown', was thirteen episodes, which still makes it the longest story (look, I know 'The Trial Of A Timelord' has fourteen parts, but that was made of separate stories lining a loosely tied arc, '...Masterplan' is a single story, so I'm right. Don't argue) in Doctor Who's history. In fact, the original serial was so long, that when it was eventually novelised by John Peel - the writer, not the heroic DJ who championed UKHC, it became two books, 'Mission To The Unknown' and 'The Mutation Of Time', and it has also become infamous with fans for a number of different reasons. You want to know what they were, and are? You do? Good, because I'm going to tell you anyway. 'The Daleks Masterplan' was the first time that Doctor Who broke the fourth wall, it's also the story in which two companions meet decidedly grizzily, and entirely separate, ends, and lastly, only three of the thirteen (yes, I'm including 'Mission To The Unknown') episodes still exist, due to the BBC wiping the others in order to use the tapes for some dreary, aimed-at-old-ladies afternoon drama (I'd love to meet the engineer who made that decision and shake him firmly by the neck... Uh, I mean, shake his hand, or something), which meant that the only ways that you could experience 'Masterplan' was either through the soundtrack recordings or John Peel's novelisations. Until now. That's right folks, BBC Audiobooks have finally released both of Peel's novels, unabridged and read by Peter 'Stephen Taylor' Purves and Jean 'Sara Kingdom' Marsh, two of the companions from the original tale, and if that wasn't enough to grab you by the hairy danglers, they've also acquired the services of voice actor extraordinaire, Nicholas Briggs, who provides all the Dalek voices in, and on, both releases. Right, okay, that's enough fan boy nonsense, time to find out how this release actually measures up and whether or not it deserves its legendary status. Well, does it? Yes, yes and thrice yes, it certainly does and then some. Often with First Doctor stories, pacing can be a problem, as the stories aren't as tightly packed together, but 'Mission To The Unknown' appears to be the exception to the rule. From the off the Doctor and his companions (who don't actually appear until about half an hour in) are plunged into a nightmare of secret service agents, alien plants that take you over, political plotting, Dalek alliances and plans to conquer the Universe, Earth bound traitors selling out their own people, time destructors, chases through the cosmos, star ship take-overs, prison planets and psychopaths, death, theft, secrets, sorrow and escape. It's breath-taking, blink and you'll miss a plot thread stuff that's delivered perfectly by Peter Purves and Jean Walsh, even though both have a distinctly different delivery style, once you get used to the way the tale switches between both of it's readers, the style difference actually enhances the story, as do the sound effects and background music which help create a sense of drama, and I can't help but feel that is just about as close to the missing serial as we're ever likely to get, and as such makes this the definitive way to experience 'The Daleks Masterplan'. One of the biggest surprises (turn out that I haven't actually read the original Peel novels. Tut, tut... Oh, behave) was the way in which 'Mission...' ends, and although I knew it was the first half of '...Masterplan', Peel's concise, clever ending means that it can be listened to as a singular entity, and that you don't need to hear the second part, unless you want to. But being a registered, card carrying fan boy, I have to. You don't though, as 'Mission..' feels complete in its own right. Things pass into fan mythology for a reason, and 'Mission To The Unknown' and 'The Daleks Masterplan' thoroughly deserve their place as bone fide Doctor Who legend... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who – Daleks: The Mutation Of Time – Written By John Peel & Read by Peter Purves and Jean Marsh (BBC Audiobooks) 5xCD

As soon as 'Mission To The Unknown' finished, I plunged straight into 'The Mutation Of Time', the second half of the original 'Daleks Master-

plan' story-arc. Okay, so you're sitting there muttering to yourself and tutting about how I should have waited, and that by jumping in at the deep end and going straight from one to the other, there's a significant risk of Dalek overdose, which could have potentially disastrous consequences for the average Doctor Who fan. But you know what? I don't believe that you can have enough Daleks, and I don't regard anyone reading this as "average", you guys are better than that, and just like me, you can take any amount of Daleks any day of the week and twice on Fridays. Following on from the end of 'Mission..' and the Doctors (spoiler alert!) switcheroo, 'The Mutation Of Time', the Doctor and his Companions find themselves leaping (fair enough, the Tardis doesn't exactly leap, but it sounds so much better than 'travelling' don't you think?) between a sixties Police Station, a film Studio in the silent age (where the Doctor and Stephen end up playing Keystone Cops...Don't ask...), a cricket match, fighting natives and Daleks alike in ancient Egypt, a planet consumed by volcanic activity before finally ending up where it all began, on Kembel, whilst trying to prevent the Daleks plans from coming to fruition, contending with an old adversary of the Doctor and Stephen (lovely little plot device and appearance for the fans) and dealing with the insane lust for power of the Earth traitor (shhh, more spoilers) Mavek Chen. But, it all sort of works out in the end though, it has to, it's Doctor Who. 'Mutation' is the perfect sequel to 'Mission...', rounding off the 'Masterplan' arc nicely, although unlike 'Mission..', 'Mutation..' can't be listened to as a standalone release, and you really need to have heard the previous part in order to understand what's going on. If you haven't, you won't have the first clue about who's after who, don't what to what and who and, or, why they've done, and are doing, what they're doing. Or something like that. Absolutely bloody fabulous... **Tim Mass Movement**



protagonists, who both deliver flawless performances. All too often, the Companion Chronicles are seen as an aside to the main story arcs, a curiosity and not much else, but 'Night's Black Agents' proves that they're a force to be reckoned with, easily on par with the main lines, and often outshining them, and is yet more proof (as if more were actually needed), that bringing Jamie McCrimmon back into the Doctor Who fold was, and is, one of the best decisions that Big Finish have ever made. Bravo... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles: Solitaire – Starring India Fisher & David Bailie & Written by John Dorney (Big Finish Productions) CD / Download

You know it's going to be a good day when Charley Pollard returns to the Doctor Who fold. Okay, maybe it's not a full time return, as 'Solitaire' is a Companion Chronicle, and maybe it is just a one off, but everything starts as a one off right? After all, it was a one off Companion Chronicle that inspired the recent Jago And Litefoot series, so fingers crossed, the same thing will happen to, and for, Charley Pollard. Anyway, enough waffle, to business. 'Solitaire' finds our erstwhile heroine suffering from amnesia, seemingly trapped in an inescapable Toy Shop, playing a deadly game against the Celestial Toymaker, a game where the rules are decided by the Toymaker and where the prize is not only her own life, but that of the Doctor as well. It's a little different to the usual Companion Chronicle, more like a Who audio drama than a Companion audio book, which makes 'Solitaire' feel more rounded, fleshing out the drama, making it a little more exciting whilst opening the door for a potential Charley series. Easily one of the best Companion Chronicles yet, and proof positive that Charley can carry a story without the Doctor's involvement. Who stories without the Doctor? Stranger things have happened... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles: Shadow Of The Past – Starring Caroline John & Lex Shrapnel – Written by Simon Guerrier (Big Finish Productions –) CD / Download

There's nothing like a healthy dose of the Third Doctor to pick you up and put the spring back in your step after a tough couple of days, and 'Shadow Of The Past' does exactly that, barely giving you time to breathe as from the word go, it frantically rushes headlong toward it's conclusion, cramming as much as possible into it's hour and some change long story. Opening with Liz Shaw (Caroline John) returning to the wreck of a spaceship, hidden in a top secret facility, that crash-landed some forty years previously, the drama weaves it's way around Liz recounting the story behind the wreck to Marshall (Lex Shrapnel), a member of UNIT, who may or may not be everything that he says he is, or seems to be. It's a good old fashioned Doctor versus the invading alien hordes story and whilst it isn't exactly the most original story that you'll ever hear, and given that the twist ending becomes blindingly obvious before the end of the first part, it's bloody good fun and is guaranteed to put a smile on your face whenever and wherever you listen to. After all, sometimes, just sometimes, it isn't about the destination, it's about how you get there, and 'Shadow Of The Past' delivers one heck of a journey. Damn good fun... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles: Night's Black Agents – Starring Frazier Hines & Hugh Ross – Written by Marty Ross (Big Finish Productions –) CD / Download

With a tale that takes its name from 'Macbeth' (and a career best collection of short stories by Fritz Leiber), I was expecting monsters, witches, demons and some sort of evil usurper to feature prominently in 'Night's Black Agents', and was rewarded with all the fore mentioned and much, much more, proving that higher education, a love of all forms of literature and a slavish devotion to Doctor Who, can often point you in the right direction and repay you twenty fold when destiny and Big Finish take the reins. Set between 'City Of Spires' and 'The Wreck Of The Titan', 'Night's Black Agents' follows the Doctor and Jamie as they attempt to find the Tardis, and in doing so are waylaid by the Kelpie and then both rescued, and offered a place to stay, by the Reverend Mero-dach, but this being Doctor Who, the good Reverend is interested in far more than the Doctor and Jamie's well being. Why does his serving girl resemble a victim of the gallows? How did he manage to charm his way into being the local laird through marriage? And why do men of the cloth make such brilliant villains? Read by Frazier Hines and Hug Russell, 'Night's Black Agents' is a marvellous example of Doctor Who at its best, a story caught somewhere between magic and science that's nearly drowning in rich, intelligent, flowing dialogue ably brought to life by the

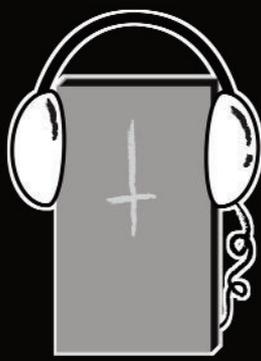
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles: The Time Vampire – Starring Louise Jameson & Written by Nigel Fairs – CD / Download (Big Finish Productions –)

If, like me, you're male and were a child in the late seventies and were a fan of Doctor Who during that period, then you'll probably remember Leela, the Fourth Doctor's assistant from that period, with a great deal of "fondness", only later realising that the mini skirt and bodice affair that passed itself off as her outfit probably helped to fire that terrible first crush, a warning sign of the emotion that pre-occupy and dominate life in the wake, and aftermath of, those terrible teenage years. So, having a story that Leela remembers just as she's about to die, came as a bit of a savage blow to ours truly. It's almost like a part of my childhood died during this story, I mean, companions don't die (well, not usually), they leave the Doctor and go on to have happy long lives and everything is rosy and hunky dory and right with the world. The thought of Leela dying is bad enough, but to have a story that takes place during her final moments, while admittedly brave and original, is almost, if you fall into the previously mentioned criteria, like getting kicked very hard in the happy dangles. It's painful, upsetting and slightly disturbing. Not that there's anything wrong with the story, writing or performances, all are top notch...The Fourth Doctor, Leela and K-9, jumping around in time, each of them connected to the unfolding story in more ways than they realise, I just found it difficult to concentrate on it, no matter how many times I listened, which was a direct consequence of when 'The Time Vampire' was, and is, set. I rarely get upset, it just doesn't happen, but for some reason 'The Time Vampire' hit me hard, and much as I eventually enjoyed the story, I probably won't be able to listen to it again. The thought of Leela dying is just one tiny step too far... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Legend Of The Cybermen – Starring Colin Baker, Frazer Hines, Wendy Padbury, Nicholas Briggs, Ian Gelder – Written by Mike Maddox (Big Finish Productions –) 2xCD / Download

It's been an incredible journey, but we've finally reached the final part of Jamie and the Sixth Doctors adventures (for now, please tell me that there'll be more...?) together, and what a way to finish the trilogy. The guys at Big Finish have gone all out to ensure that 'The Legend Of The Cybermen' ends on the highest high that anything has ever ended on. It's almost like they found the perfect high, and then added a fifty ladder to its peak, just to make sure. 'The Legend Of The Cybermen' starts exactly where 'The Wreck Of The Titan' left off, with the Doctor and Jamie stuck in the Void that surrounds 'The Land Of Fiction' (first encountered in 'The Mind Robber'), and before you can do your best Tardis 'Woorp,

Woop' impression, the story hits fifth gear and doesn't slow down until the closing moments. Dracula, Camelot, Cybermen, Alice (that's right, the one from Wonderland), a cyber-converted Moby Dick, Fairies, Castle Frankenstein, the return of Zoe and much, much more make 'The Legend Of The Cybermen' one of the most exciting Doctor Who stories it's been my pleasure to encounter in any medium. There's twists, turns, reversals and more in a story whose plot is so tight it could turn carbon into diamond in five minutes flat, that thrusts the unexpected on you at the drop of a hat, in which nothing is as it seems, nor has it been since the trilogy started and that infuses you with a feeling a finality straight from the off, that pushes you toward the inevitability that everything in the trilogy has been leading to this point, every plot thread, every action and reaction, it all leads to this point, and this is one journey that'll leave you breathless and begging for more. The dynamic that exist between the three leads is perfect, and left me hoping that somehow, somehow, Big Finish will ensure that the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe are reunited once more. Remember that high I was talking about? The one that story goes out on? Well, I defy anyone out there to get past it without a tear welling up inside you. Believe me, I tried. And failed. I honestly can't see how Big Finish are ever going to top this one... **Tim Mass Movement**



Doctor Who: The Lost Stories: Point Of Entry – Starring : Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, Matt Addis, Luis Soto, Tam Williams – Written by Barbara Clegg & Adapted by Marc Platt (Big Finish Productions –) 2xCD / Download

Oh, this takes me back. Takes me all the way back to my first year of University. For those of you scratching your heads, wondering how an audio drama and Doctor Who are linked to my days of scholastic endeavour (or lack of it, according to who you ask), I apologise, and think that maybe I jumped the gun a little, and as such, some back tracking is in order. You see, 'Point Of Entry' opens with the Doctor and Peri discovering a signal from a seemingly rogue asteroid, and thanks in part to said asteroid, end up in Elizabethan England, entangled with Christopher Marlowe as he's trying to complete 'The Tragical History Of Doctor Faustus' (or as it's more commonly known, 'Doctor Faustus'), and what was the first text I had to study in the first term of my first year at University? That's right folks, 'Doctor Faustus'. Now that the link has been well and truly established, back we go to 'Point To Entry'. As most of you know by now, historical Who is (along with any stories featuring Cybermen, Silurians, Ice Warriors and Daleks. What can I say? I'm a sucker for the classics) where my heart lies, where I think the show (and any an all associated drama's, books and adventures of course) really shines, and 'Point Of Entry' is a perfect example of historical Who done well. Very well in fact. Alright, so maybe my familiarity with the subject matter might, just might, have played a tiny part in my enjoyment of 'Point...', , believe me, there's a lot more to enjoy in this story. A mysterious, seemingly immortal, Spaniard in league with evil spirits whose "necromantic teachings" have attracted Marlowe to the dark side, adventure on the astral plane, human sacrifice, spies and intelligence gathering, a cursed blade that's linked to the stars, imminent alien invasion, a foul and loathsome dwarf and Peri posing as Elizabeth I in order to steal the Queens booty – that's stolen treasure not the modern meaning with bottoms wiggling here, there and everywhere in strange pop videos. Honestly, you lot, minds in the gutter. So, I ask you, with all of that on offer, what's not to like? Tie all of it together with a first rate cast, who for the first time come close to making the Doctor a secondary character or bit part player in one of his own stories, and you get classic Doctor Who. The Lost Stories just keep getting better and better. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant! **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories: The Macros – Starring Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, Linda Marlowe, Vincent Prillo, Jack Gallagher – Written by Ingrid Pitt & Tony Rudlin (Big Finish Productions) 2xCD / Download

'The Macros' is what Doctor Who is all about. It's everything that's good about Who, and everything that I love about the show. A quintessential Who story that utilises all of its ingredients perfectly to craft and create a story that's damn near perfect in terms of writing, execution and delivery. Okay, so that's probably one of the worst introductions I've ever committed to paper, or file memory, but I honestly can't think of any other way to describe 'The Macros'. What makes it so good? Imagine a story that involves The Philadelphia Experiment, alternate Universes and Dimensions, a despotic, crazed alien ruler who governs her planet with the iron fist of tyranny and her plans to conquer the Earth, and then

plunge The Doctor and Peri into the mix, and Voila, perfect Who that works on every single level, combining top notch writing with plenty of action and pace, a great story, supposed government conspiracies and cover-ups and theoretical physics. I'd love to tell you more, I really would. But I don't want to spoil a single second of this story for anyone, and a brief outline is the only way that I'll be able to stop myself babbling like an idiot about plotlines and story and how it unfolds. Sure, there are a few saw-it-coming-fairly-obvious moments, but in a story this good, you can easily forgive, and even revel in, them. Like I said, 'The Macros' is a perfect slice of Doctor Who, and proof positive that the Lost Stories have continued to get better and better as the series has progressed. Colin Baker and

Nicola Bryant are, as ever, excellent as the Doctor and Peri, and I can't help but feel that the BBC's decision to abandon this season in the eighties was one of the worst decisions that they ever made, and in terms of idiocy, is right up there with the Studio's who claimed that Star Wars would never sell. Still, the BBC's loss is Big Finish's gain, but someone, somewhere should be kicking themselves right about now, or at the very least, having someone else kick them for making such a monumental cock up. Oh well, that's in the past, and 'The Macros' is here now, so make the most of it and make sure you get your grubby mitts on it as soon as you possibly can, or, if you believe in travel between universes and the implications that it has on the passage of time, even sooner... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories: The Song Of Megaptera – Starring Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, John Benfield, Susan Brown, Toby Longworth, Alex Lowe – Written by Pat Mills (Big Finish Productions –) 2xCD / Download

I've always been a fan of Pat Mills. It was Pat, via Action and 2000 AD, that transformed me into the proud comic book junkie that I am today, a life-long habit that I have no intention of ever giving up, or seeking help (as if any was needed) for. From 'Flesh' to 'Charley's War' to 'Slaine' and 'Requiem', I've yet to come across a story that has Pat's name on it that I haven't thoroughly enjoyed and read time and time again, but 'The Song Of Megaptera' was, and is, the first time I've come across Pat as a Doctor Who writer, and to be honest, knowing the stories long and difficult history from gestation to commission and on to eventual recording, I was expecting more. Don't get me wrong, 'The Song Of Megaptera' is a good, solid Doctor Who tale, trapping 'Old Sixie' and Peri between a Space Whale (the eponymous Megaptera) and the Whalers hell bent on capturing and harvesting the cosmic beast to appease their corporate bosses and safeguard their jobs, whilst dealing with fungus based alien life forms who also have a vested interest in the Space Whale, and the stowaways to whom Megaptera has granted shelter and sanctuary. Granted, there are some fantastic moments, the brilliant security guard double act courtesy of Toby Longworth and Alex Lowe that comes across like a twisted intergalactic version of Beavis and Butthead had they been created in Essex, and John Benfield as Captain Ahab...sorry, Greeg, and Nicola Bryant almost steal the show and whip the carpet from under the Doctors feet. It's Moby Dick meets Alien in head on collision with old school Doctor Who, and had it been filmed and screened during Colin Bakers run on television, it would have undoubtedly been one of the highlights of his brief televisual tenure. Like I said, it's a good Doctor Who story that more than holds its own, and could stand up against any of the eighties series (which being one of 'The Lost Stories', it was originally intended to do) and emerge triumphant, it's just that Pat Mills was at the helm, and it ended up being, well, good when it should have been GREAT. It should have been great, with Pat at the rudder, it should have been great. Oh well, I'll take a good Pat Mills story over ninety-nine percent of the competition any day of the week and twice on Sunday... **Tim Mass Movement**

Doctor Who: The Three Doctors – Written by Terrence Dicks & Read by Katy Manning (BBC Audiobooks) 4xCD

It doesn't matter how much you try to tell yourself that each and every Doctor Who story should be treated equally and that, as a reviewer, you shouldn't play favourites, sometimes it just isn't true. You know it, and everyone that you try, in your very best half hearted hopeless manner, to convince, knows it as well. Such is the case (well, in my case anyway), with 'The Three Doctors'. You see, I love this story, have done ever since I read the original Target novel in 1980, and spent a week absorbing cathode rays from a distance of twelve inches when the BBC repeated it in 1981, and as such I might be a little biased toward it. I said

might, so that's that, and if you don't like it, stop reading. Go on, I dare you. Still here are you? Good, then we'll proceed. 'The Three Doctors' finds our hero, having to face possibly his greatest foe, Omega, a Timelord, who as a Solar Engineer, provided Gallifrey with the power it needed to utilise Time Travel, but in doing so, he became trapped in a Universe composed of anti-matter. After countless millennia, driven insane by a desire for revenge (he blames his people, the Timelords for abandoning him, even though they didn't. Hey. The guys cuckoo, and it makes a great story, so quit moaning about 'reality' and have a little fun) Omega discovers a way to reach out to our Universe, and begins to drain all of the energy from our plane of existence, through to his own, and the only man who stop him? The Doctor. Well, when I say man, I mean men, as the only way the Doctor can defeat him, is by joining forces with his previous incarnations to face the greatest threat the Universe has ever know. It's rip roaring stuff, and the fact that it's read by Katy Manning (Jo Grant, the Third Doctor's second assistant), adds enormously to the story, as having played the assistant / companion in the original serial/ story, she has a sort of easy familiarity with the tale and an uncanny gift for characterisation (her impressions of Pertwee, Troughton and Hartnell are spot on), which somehow elevates her reading, which in turn helps to make 'The Three Doctors' the best Doctor Who audiobook taken from a Target novel that the BBC have released so far. Even given how biased I am toward this story, there's no denying that it's an excellent adaptation, and that the BBC have though long and hard about how best to bring these stories to life, and continue to do so ensuring that they get better and better with each successive release. Absolutely bloody brilliant... **Tim Mass Movement**



Doctor Who: The Wreck Of The Titan – Starring Colin Baker, Frazer Hines, Alexander Siddig, Christopher Fairbank, Miranda Raison & Matt Addis – Written by Barnaby Edwards – 2xCD / Download (Big Finish Productions –)

Wow. Given that my, admittedly high, expectations surrounding the return of Jamie McCrimmon were not only met, but exceeded with 'City Of Spires', I was half expecting to be gently let down by 'The Wreck Of The Titan', the second part of the Sixth Doctor and Jamie trilogy. When I say expecting, I mean, I was hoping that wasn't going to be the case, but if you prepare for the worst, then anything else is a bonus right? Once again though, I needn't have worried, as the guys at Big Finish seem determined to ensure that the return of everyone's favourite Scottish companion (yeah, Jamie still pips the new girl to the post, but there's no denying that Amy looks way better in a skirt) would be a huge event, and that the stories in which he featured would be among the best that they'd ever released, and having listened to, and become lost in, 'The Wreck Of The Titan', I can assure you that they've definitely fulfilled their objective. In fact, I reckon they've surpassed it. The story starts simply enough, with the Doctor and Jamie arriving on The Titanic on the 14th April 1912 (that's right pop pickers, the night she sank) instead of where the Doctor intended them to be, the Queen Mary in 1936, but given that it's par for the course that The Doctor makes mistakes, it's obviously time for a tale based around the sinking of the world famous ocean liner. Uh, no it isn't. Almost as soon as they arrive, the Doctor starts to notice little details which are quite right, and just as the Titanic is about to strike the Iceberg, the Doctor and Jamie find themselves transported through time to 1898, to a ship called The Titan, whose eventual fate is exactly the same as the White Star Line's unsinkable go-liath, and that's when things start to get really strange. I mean, really, really strange in a good way, the sort of way that knocks you for six, and leaves you muttering something along the lines of "Well bugger me, I didn't see that coming...How the hell are they going to get out of this?". 'The Wreck Of The Titan' feels like a Second Doctor story, it's intelligent, tightly plotted and well written, and delivers twist after twist and turn after turn, with a superb cast (look at those names, (that's right, it's Julian Bashir from 'Deep Space Nine' and Jo from 'Spooks' delivering an incredible performance that pulls the whole thing together. Okay, so the references to previous Who adventures may be lost on the casual fan, it ends on one hell of a cliff-hanger that means you'll NEED to get your hands on next months installment, and you really do need to have heard 'City Of Spires' to fully appreciate everything that happens, but I'm not a casual fan, I'm one of the devoted, I love cliff-hangers and I have heard 'City Of Spires', and I'm guessing that the fact you've made it this far, means that you're just like me, and that being the case, you need to stop reading now, break out your wallet, hit the Big Finish website and press that little button marked "Buy Now". You'll be so glad you did,

and just like me, you'll be grinning for hours after 'The Wreck Of The Titan' has finished, desperately trying to figure out how they'll finally tie the whole arc together. Wonderful, absolutely wonderful... **Tim Mass Movement**

Fireborn – Performed by Toby Longworth & Written by Nick Kyme – CD (Black Library)

I'll admit it, I'm a late convert to the Warhammer 40,000 Universe. Sure, when I was a teenager I played Warhammer, but things have changed an awful lot, and have come a long way since then. Back then, it was a fantasy based wargame that was slowly making the transition to RPG, and was something of an elitist hobby, these days, the Universe it's set in is huge, as is its mythology, ranging from the original Fantasy setting to the vast depths of a space, galaxies that are slowly being conquered and draw into the Imperium of Mankind, and the mythology is growing at an exponential rate, as the amount of fiction based on Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 increases, more and more titles emerging to feed the desires of an ever growing legion of fans. No longer an elitist hobby, Warhammer fiction can frequently be found in many bestseller lists. It's now, I'm glad to say, big business, proving that you don't have to sanitised, squeaky clean and inoffensive to make the break into the mainstream conscious. Sometimes, gore soaked mayhem, limitless violence, heroic and nefarious deeds committed and perpetrated on a grand scale and blood splattered stories of war and conquest can make it here, there and everywhere. Which leads us neatly into 'Fireborn' a self-contained Warhammer drama that follows the Firedrakes, a Space Marine Unit born in the fires of Vulcan, defending a Holy Relic from the encroaching forces of Chaos and their soul fed, sorcerous demon engine. Performed admirably (once again) by Toby Longworth, it's high octane, brutal stuff that plunges you straight into a Universe of Warfare, pain and destruction, and it's bloody (in every sense of the word) marvellous. Well written, fleshed out characters fighting against seemingly impossible odds. What more could the ten year that exists just below the surface of each and every one of us possibly want? My only criticism of 'Fireborn' is that it could have done with an extra couple of actors to bring some of the minor characters to life, but when immersed in the fire of bolter guns, it becomes almost a mute point. Maybe they'll look at adding to the cast of future releases, but until then, you can, just like me, lose yourself in the glorious adventures of the Firedrakes.... **Tim Mass Movement**

Jago & Litefoot: Series One – Starring Christopher Benjamin, Trevor Baxter, Lisa Bowerman, Toby Longworth, Conrad Asquith & Written by Justin Richards, Alan Barnes, Jonathan Morris & Andy Lane (Big Finish Productions –) 5xCD / Download

Finally, the intrepid middle age Victorian investigators of the odd, strange and bizarre, get top billing in a production and their own series, and not a moment too soon if I do say so myself. When Big Finish resurrected Jago and Litefoot (originally introduced in 'The Talons Of Weng Chiang') for 'The Mahogany Murders', one of the best of their long running Companion Chronicles, it was only a matter of time before they were granted their very own spin-off series, one in which, through deeds heroic and grand actions, they would repeatedly foil the dastardly machinations and vile plots and plans of those who would seek to do the world and all who dwell in her, harm. Henry Gordon Jago and George Litefoot have long been firm fan favourites, as not only did they appear as the main supporting characters in one of the most beloved of all Doctor Who serials (the fore mentioned 'Talons...'), but they were, and are, two of the most well rounded and well developed characters in the Whoniverse, who were brought to incredibly vivid life by Christopher Benjamin (Jago) and Trevor Baxter (Litefoot), both of whom, once again, bring Jago and Litefoot back to glorious Technicolor glory, in this their first (and surely, not their only) series. Comprised of four separate ('The Bloodless Soldier', 'The Bellova Devil', 'The Spirit Trap' and 'The Similarity Engine'), but nonetheless linked adventurous investigations, Series One pits our heroes against time travelling invaders and mediums, werebeasts from the darkest depths of India, vampires hell bent on revenge, and their very own Nemesis, that most evil of villains, the nefarious Doctor Tulp (played by the always excellent Toby Longworth), a black-hearted rogue whose dedication to the darkest scientific arts is matched only by his lust for power. Of course, there are bound to be comparisons to Holmes and Watson (the period setting, the appearance of their own "Moriarty" etc.), but this only adds to the sense of fun that runs throughout and are used throughout to great effect (Litefoot playing

with Holmes most famous quotation is particularly delicious), after all, if you can't have a bit of fun with 'the establishment', who can you have fun with? 'Jago & Litefoot' wraps comedy, steam-punk and good old fashioned Victorian adventure together in an absolutely incredible package that's nothing less than thoroughly entertaining from beginning to end, and just like *Oliver Twist*, I was left wanting more as the final adventure in this series drew to a close. Absolutely, and thoroughly, recommended. Bravo, bravo and once again, bravo... **Tim Mass Movement**



Journey Into Space: The Host – Starring Toby Stephens, Jana Carpenter, Alan Marriot, Chris Pavlo, Basher Savage, Jot Davies & David Jacobs (BBC Audiobooks) CD

'Journey Into Space', the bastion of Fifties (that's the nineteen fifties kids) BBC radio broadcast, the last radio show to smash Television ratings to pulp, is back and it's bigger, bolder and better than ever. The strange thing about it though, is that this new production, 'The Host' has lost none of it's original charm, and retains it's Golden Age (of Science Fiction – the 50's, the Big Cahoona, you know, little green men, epic star journeys and grand interstellar wars. No? Shame on you...) sense of adventure and story telling. This time around, Toby Stephens (the only man alive who could play both Dan Dare and Harry Flashman), plays square jawed hero, Jet Morgan, who along with his crew, battles long dead friends, overcomes a space hijacking and finally confronts an insidious alien intelligence hell bent on taking over a space station in order to claim the mysterious discovery hidden in it's laboratories, and form there, who knows what it wants next? The Universe itself perhaps.... Of course, in between all the big plot lines, there are plenty of other minor threads which could, in themselves, become proper edge of your seat storylines (corporate warships with Electro Magnetic Pulse Cannons? That's too good an idea not to be pursued), but the rules of Spoiler-Ville prevent me from discussing them any further. I will however, say this... They're bloody brilliant, and if the in between stuff is that good, imagine what the main plot is like, then multiply that idea by ten, and you'll sort of get an inkling of just how good 'The Host' is. There has to be more, they can't leave something this good as it is, there must be more. Don't make me start a letter writing campaign. I will you know, I'll bloody well start scribbling unless the BBC get producing.... **Tim Mass Movement**

Sherlock Holmes: Holmes And The Ripper – Starring Nicholas Briggs, Richard Earl, India Fisher, Lex Shrapnel, Samuel Clemens, Matt Addis - Written by Brian Clemens (Big Finish Productions) () 2xCD / Download

After what seems like an eternity, but in reality is more like three months or so, give or take a week, the final instalment of the first series of Big Finish's Sherlock Holmes dramas is finally with us, and so, without further ado, we have to move on to the big questions. Was 'Holmes And The Ripper' worth waiting for? Does it live up to its predecessors, and can it stand on it's own against them? Honestly? Yes, yes and yes, although in some ways it's like comparing chalk and cheese, as the previous entries ('The Last Act' and 'The Death And Life') were both one man plays, and 'Holmes And The Ripper' is an ensemble piece, a full cast audio adventure, with the emphasis firmly placed on adventure. Even though 'Holmes And The Ripper' isn't the most original story, being based on Stephen Knight's theory (Alan Moore also used it as the basis for 'From Hell') that the murders were in fact perpetrated by the Mason's in order to preserve the sanctity of the British Monarchy after Prince Albert's marriage to a commoner resulted in an unrecognised heir to the throne, the victims all being acquaintances of his "bride", or having knowledge of the fore mentioned marriage and offspring. However, throw Sherlock Holmes (as Big Finish have done) into the plot, and it suddenly takes on a new light, and develops a life of it's own, it's pacing and plot like a runaway carriage, gathering momentum as it unfolds and hurtles toward it's climax. The real surprise though, the thing that caught me completely unaware, is the cast of 'Holmes And The Ripper'. India Fisher, as ever is on fine form, as are Lex Shrapnel and Richard Earl, but the real revelation is Nicholas Briggs performance as Holmes. Confident and assured, yet understated, and shot through with just the right amount of emotion, bravado and eccentricity, Briggs has delivered, at least as far as I'm concerned, one of the definitive portrayals of the character, and has surpassed all expectation, easily following and living up to Llewellyn's turn in the previous Big Finish stories, and can take his place as the final part of the Holmes quartet along with Rathbone, Brett and the fore-mentioned Llewellyn. In fact, I'd go as far to say, 'Holmes And The Ripper' is the best of the three Holmes tales that Big Finish have so far delivered, pipping the others to the post, solely by virtue of hav-

ing a full cast and being able to draw all the emotion and drama created by such. I just hope that Briggs returns to the role, and that more Holmes plays are forthcoming, as it would be a shame if this was his only dalliance with Conan Doyle's most famous creation. He'd certainly go out on high, but it would be a damn shame nonetheless. Time for me to tune in and press play once more, for as Sherlock Holmes himself might say, "The game is afoot"... **Tim Mass Movement**

The Further Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes Volume 4 – Starring Clive Merrison & Andrew Sachs & Written by Bert Coules (BBC Audiobooks) 4xCD

Timing is everything. Take 'The Further Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes Volume 4' for instance. On the surface, it's everything that any self-respecting Holmes fan, barring the purists, (but let's not go down that road...) could want. A trio of new stories based on tiny, tantalising references dotted throughout Watson's (or rather Conan Doyle's) chronicles of the world famous detective, and had I not already had the pleasure of hearing Big Finish's recent Sherlock Holmes trilogy ('The Last Act', 'The Death And Life' and 'Holmes And The Ripper'), I would have been instantly sold. However, I have heard the previously mentioned trilogy, and as I was completely blown away by both Nicholas Briggs and Roger Llewellyn's, vastly different and yet incredibly similar, intense, emotive portrayals of Holmes, and the adventures in which each brought the detective to life, and as such, this release, had one heck of a lot to live up to. For the most part, it succeeds pretty well. Clive Merrison delivers a worthy, if somewhat traditional, Holmes and Andrew Sachs is surprisingly effective (given that my only frame of reference for him as an actor is as a bumbling Spanish waiter) as Watson, and Bert Coules original tales of the duo's adventures are for the most part, both entertaining, absorbing and gripping, but there is a slight issue with quality control. Opening story, 'The Remarkable Performance Of Mr. Frederick Merridew' is a startling tour-de-force, Hugh Bonneville's villainous wretch a sublime performance that teases the best from his co-stars, and closing two parter 'The Marlbourne Point Mystery' is as good as any of the classic Holmes tales, and the cast, are (just like that crazy old nanny, Mary Poppins) practically perfect in every way. It's the middle play that lets it down. You'd think, (well, I did before I heard it) with a title like 'The Eyes Of Horus' that it would be a good old fashioned whodunit murder mystery that centred around some vast archaeological puzzle that had remained unsolved for millennia, but you'd be wrong. Instead, it's a slightly boring heard-it-all before jewel theft story in which the culprits identity is immediately obvious, that lacks both the pace and style of the other two instalments. Still, it's not all bad, I suppose I can lose the middle disc down the back of the sofa, forget all about it forever more, and happily listen to the opening and closing dramas over and over again. Yes, that's it. That's exactly what I'll do... **Tim Mass Movement**

The Horus Heresy: The Dark King & The Lightning Tower – Read by Danny Webb & Written by Graham McNeil & Dan Abnett (Black Library) CD

And, as the play button is pressed, I ready myself, preparing to be plunged back into the violence and bloodshed of the Warhammer Universe. This time, I'll be prepared for the uber-battles, the mayhem, destruction and death wrought on a grand scale. Prepared as I am, they never arrive. With both 'The Dark King' and 'The Lightning Tower', the Black Library have turned their war beast around, opting instead to explore the stories of the evolved post-human Primarch's that lead their opposing forces in the 'The Horus Heresy', the Civil War that threatens the empire of men to shreds as it rages across know and unknown space. Sure, 'The Dark King' has it's moments of gore soaked onslaught, as Konrad Curze finally gives into his encroaching insanity and accepts his future, leading his Night Lords against the Emperor, but it is just moments, as the story, like 'The Lightning Tower', focuses on the leaders behind the conflict, what drives them, who they really are and how both (Kurze in 'The Dark King' and Rogal Dorn in 'The Lightning Tower') react to the destinies that fate has dealt them. Whilst I'm a fan of the epic stories of Space Warfare that the Black Library serve up to the Warhammer faithful on a regular basis, 'The Dark King & The Lightning Tower' is possibly their strongest audio release yet, powerfully written, evocative drama, fabulous characterisation and a flawless, emotive reading by Danny Webb, combine to create something that's instantly familiar, yet at the same time, completely different, that five minutes after it begins, becomes compulsive listening. Thoroughly recommended, and the first of hopefully many, such releases from the Black Library... **Tim Mass Movement**

Torchwood: The Radio Adventures – Starring John Barrowman, Eve Myles & Gareth David-Lloyd (BBC Audio-books) 4xCD

Ah, the homespun Doctor Who Sci-Fi off-shoot that features lots of impossibly good looking folks running around Cardiff saving the Earth from dastardly alien machinations and time twisted terror courtesy of the Rift around which the Welsh capital is built (the nexus of which is probably smack bang in the centre of the Brains brewery) is served up as a series of four audio dramas. Best get stuck in then. Truth be told, all four of the audio drama's were originally broadcast as Radio Four plays, and three of them ('Asylum', 'Golden Age' and 'The Dead Line') were also available to download from the BBC site for a week before the third series of 'Torchwood' originally aired, as they were designed to bridge the gap between the previous series and the one that was about to air. Whether they're battling aliens who've ripped their way into our dimension through the LHC at CERN ('Lost Souls'), desperately trying to help a half alien, half human girl who ends up in present day Cardiff after falling into the Rift in our future ('Asylum'), slapping the stiff upper lip off the last bastion of the British Empire attempting to corrupt time and by doing so return the world to a ('Golden Age') or fighting a techno-organic virus that use the telephone system to hunt down and strike it's victims ('The Dead Line'), Torchwood are here to save us all in their own much-copied, never bettered, Adults only, Warp Factor Ten Doctor Who style. Think of this box-set as Torchwood series 2.5 and you won't go far wrong, as it's one of the strongest releases from the BBC in a far old while, and pretty much an essential purchase if you're a fan of the show. Which I am, and if you're reading this, I'm guessing you are as well. Besides, we all know that Captain Jack Harkness is just about the best damn hero that any show has created in the last two decades, and who wouldn't want to tune into another four adventures featuring the immortal, bisexual, intergalactic, time hopping head of Torchwood? You know as well as I do that you've already added this to your shopping cart. Play or Amazon, it doesn't matter, it's already there...

Tim Mass Movement



Yes Minister Vol. 5 & 6 – Starring Paul Eddington, Nigel Hawthorn and Derek Fowlds (BBC Audio-books) 2xCD Each Volume

'Yes Minister' has been a constant in my life for the last quarter of a century, and is probably, at least partially, responsible for helping to form my deeply held (You've heard of Socialism haven't you? Turn left there and keep going, and that's the political road you'll find me travelling down) convictions, lambasting and satirising the government, and the previously unknown opposing forces that determine the fate of the UK. The Civil Service and the "leadership", the Ministers and Members of Parliament. As Thatcher's hated regime was in power at the time, it was widely regarded as being aimed at the

Conservative government, but made a point of never mentioning any party by name, preferring to draw the conclusion that all parties are basically the same, only names differ. Both volumes (available separately), contain the soundtracks to various episodes of the show taken from the three series, with no regard given to the chronological order, which if I'm honest, isn't a problem, as each episode was self-contained. Despite the fact that 'Yes Minister' has been a constant source of entertainment during my adult life, the struggles behind the doors of power and the endless battles between Jim Hacker (Minister for Administrative Affairs) and Sir Humphrey Appleby, his permanent secretary (on these volumes, the fights centre around equality, spending cuts, sexual equality within the civil service, Hackers eventual promotion to Prime Minister and much, much more), still make me laugh out loud, resulting in unwanted coffee wastage and spillage due to spit and dribble disasters caused by said merriment. Curse those politicians and their shenanigans, and curse the BBC for making this damn show which has resulted in some rather unpleasant caffeine burns in some rather unpleasant places. Should come with a bloody Health And Safety warning. Probably one of the funniest shows to have ever graced our airwaves, but over-exposure can lead to serious personal injury. You've been warned... **Tim Mass Movement**

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HEIDEVOLK



An interview with Heidevolk isn't just about talking to a metal band about their latest release. It's a trip through history. Back to a time when Gelderland, then called Guelders (or Gelre in Dutch) was at the height of its power. From the capital of Upper Guelders, I called guitar player Reamon who resides in the Quarter of Arnhem. 'Uit Oude Grond' the band's new album on Napalm Records has just hit the shelves all over Europe.

Interview by Martijn Welzen

MM: It's interesting that your songs are about the history of the Dutch province of Gelderland, but your first video is about a goddess from Zeeland, another one of the Dutch provinces...

Reamon: It was a coincidence we chose 'Nehalennia' for the first clip. We wanted to do a video, and already decided it should be one of the shorter, more catchy songs. At the same time, the video and film production company, Framecat, approached us and wanted to do a video. It's actually not that weird for us singing about something not directly linked to Gelderland. The Germanic mythology is one of the pillars of our music and stretches from Scandinavia to Northern France. Which reminds me, on our previous record we had a song about Radboud (Redbad in English), king of the Frisians. He was a fierce defender of paganism and refused to be baptized...

MM: Now that we've established that history and mythology are important for Heidevolk, I wondered if it was just out of interest or is there also a sense of longing for the old days?

Reamon: I have to say the answer differs with every respective band member. For me personally it's about an interest in the history of this region. I'm a history teacher and just love reading about what went on centuries ago. For guys like Joris (singer) and Sebas (guitar) there's a more romantic view. Sebas is very much interested in the old Germanic mythology and Joris loves

being in nature on his own. The vastness and wildlife really have an attraction for him. This is also the core of what Heidevolk are about. The three pillars of our music are: Germanic mythology, which reached its heights at the early Middle Ages. Then there's the period at the end of the Middle Ages in which Gelderland as we know today gradually took shape. Lastly there's nature in general... forests, sea, weather. The forces of nature.

MM: I wondered about that...Musically, you're pagan metal, but 'Karel van Egmond', whom one of your songs is about, wasn't a heathen...

Reamon: Right, yeah that's the thing. These subjects get used as we see fit. There's not really a chronological order or anything. We do have this label of pagan metal, but wouldn't want things to be seen as being that strict. The fun and freedom in doing the things we like are also very important...

MM: You mentioned you teach history. Was 'Karel van Egmond' written by you? As that's more concerned with factual things...

Reamon: No, I haven't written any lyrics... yet. You know I love history, but putting something to lyrics is another thing. I fear it might just be cold facts and numbers. That wouldn't make a good Heidevolk song. Joris is a much better writer. He has a special way with words. Still, in the future I might give it a shot...

MM: Is that also why you called your release party a 'straalschijfontenfeest'?

Reamon: I think so. There's not a Dutch word for either a release party or a compact disc, so Joris invented it. You know, it's never a problem taking words from other languages, and these days especially from English. It's always good to add words to the Dutch vocabulary. The problem however is that English words are replacing Dutch words, which doesn't make any sense. It's something you mostly see in business.

MM: Maybe that has to do with globalization. With English your reach is a lot further...

Reamon: I have thought about that. When we started out we just said we wanted to make heavy 'viking metal' with catchy guitars. The next question was whether to use Dutch or English. As we wanted to sing about the region of Gelderland we thought Dutch would fit better. That was it actually. Looking back it might have been influenced by our own identity, albeit subconsciously. We never set out to be something like the defenders of our language and history. In hindsight singing in Dutch has given us an extra edge. Almost every interview the language thing comes up and we have gained interest from many different areas because of it, people who might not have been interested if we sang in English.

MM: It's a brave thing though, as Swedish band Amon Amarth, who touch base with you on several points, chose English and not Swedish...

Reamon: Ah, but in the end that might have been a smarter choice, commercially speaking ha,ha,ha.

MM: Wouldn't it have been more logical singing in Low Saxon, the historical language of Gelre, instead of Dutch?

Reamon: We don't speak Low Saxon. Although, not that long ago, I got a text in Low Saxon and it struck me how much I could understand. It is indeed the historical language of this region and maybe in the future we can do something with that. We'll see what crosses our poaths as far as that's concerned...

MM: How do other people, who don't speak any Dutch, take, or react to, your lyrics?

Reamon: They love it. There's always this interesting tension you have when listening to music whose lyrics you don't understand. You're listening with your heart instead of your mind. It's the same with many of the Norwegian black metal bands. Many of them also sing in Norwegian. A nice anecdote about the language difference... When we were in Italy it struck us how many people tried singing in Dutch. That was an amazing experience, as crooked as their pronunciation might be, it really touched us.

MM: Some years ago, you covered the anthem of Gelderland, and now 'Gelders Lied' is on your album. What is that about? Is that similar to the anthem?

Reamon: It is actually. The lyrics are, just as with the anthem written by Jan van Riemsdijk. He wrote many songs about Gelderland and just as with the anthem, it's an ode to the province.

MM: So why is Gelderland the most beautiful of the twelve Dutch provinces?

Reamon: Nature for one... The Veluwe is the biggest national park we have in this country. Also the historic towns really appeal to us. Plus the fact people here are very down to earth. When we travel to other countries, and in reality even to other parts of The Netherlands, the mentality differs. We all feel right at home here. Not that many people live here, there's a fair share of nature etc. Of course, it's also because we were born here. Someone from Friesland or Limburg will tell you exactly the same.

MM: So the lyrics are mainly based on what directly surrounds you. How about the music?

Reamon: You know that might very well be the most difficult question one could ask. We all have different tastes in music. Personally I like a band like Manowar, who have an obvious influence on us, but I also like 80's metal and even glamrock. The other guys like music ranging from pure black metal to folk music...

MM: Besides the well-known metal or rock n roll instruments, you also use other instruments. What can you tell us about them and how you use them?

Reamon: We do use instruments like violin, flute or mandolin. And also a horn, although that is merely used to as a filler with some songs. It just adds to the atmosphere. You know, we do write all songs on guitar and when they are done, we replace some bits with other instruments to give it the vibe it needs.

MM: 'Uit Oude Grond' is out, so what's next?

Reamon: Now we want to do what we do best... get out there and play. A couple of (weekend) shows and in September it's off with the Heidenfest tour, with Ensiferum, Swashbuckle, Equilibrium and us. Unfortunately I can't make the tour as I have to work. I'm pretty bummed out by that, but not much we can do about it...



THE BUNBUN'S MASTER

WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE DEPTHS OF SPACE ?

STARBLAZER ADVENTURES, MINDJAMMER, STARBLAZER ADVENTURES STORYTELLER'S SCREEN AND 100 SCI-FI ADVENTURE SEEDS

I've always been a huge science fiction fan. From the moment, as a child, I gazed up wide-eyed and read (correction, had read to me, I was very, very young in 1977) the big yellow letters as they scrolled up the cinema screen with the immortal line "IT IS A PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR. REBELS SPACE SHIPS HAVE WON THEIR FIRST VICTORY." I was hooked. This love of Sci-Fi was not purely limited to the big screen. No, any form of space adventure that crossed my path, from kids cartoons (Ulysses 31, to the old reruns of Larry 'Buster' Crabbe' as Flash Gordon, forever thwarting the evil Ming the Merciless, to Star Trek or Buck Rogers In The 25th Century, to Battlestar Galactica or the science fiction short stories of H G Wells and Jules Verne, were eagerly devoured. Well, you get the idea - I was a Sci-Fi junky, especially when it came to comics.

If ever there was a medium that was perfectly made for Science Fiction it was comics. Unlike TV or cinema, comics are not curtailed by budgets. Vast, sweeping, epic adventures can easily be told by the medium of sequential storytelling, with the action metaphorically leaping off the page. Plus, unlike a lot of science fiction novels, comics leave the reader with no confusion as to what the aliens, robots, heroes, starships etc. look like. Another bonus with comics is that the need for lengthy descriptions establishing each and every scene are dispensed with, as it is apparent from the opening panel where you are and who is who. OK, there are a few captions to provide that extra detail 'A SMALL TANKER BLASTED AWAY FROM CAPAL II - IT WAS AN ILLEGAL TAKE OFF', but the point is you can get on with telling the story. And that is where Starblazer excelled.

Now, most you regular readers will already know the story of Starblazer from Liam Roman's excellent feature last issue. For those of you who don't, may I suggest that you go back, download issue #26 and read it - it's well worth it. In the meantime, here's a brief explanation: Starblazer was 'Space Fiction Adventure In Pictures'. That's the wordy way of saying it was a Sci-Fi comic. It was launched in 1979 and ran until 1990. Each 68 page issue had a self-contained Sci-Fi tale that were written and illustrated by some of the best talents in the industry. They took you to the depths of space and the farthest reaches of your imagination. In short, they were brilliant!

Fast forward twenty years and Chris Birch and Stuart Newman, two divinely-inspired (or slightly mad) game designers at Cubicle 7, have released Starblazer Adventures: The Rock And Roll Space Opera Adventure Game! Together, they have married two of my favourites things in the universe, roleplaying and Starblazer, into one of the best Sci-Fi roleplaying games around.

So what is Starblazer Adventures? It's all about Space Opera! By Space Opera we mean Star Wars, Farscape, Battlestar Galactica, they are all fine examples of Space Opera. It's action-packed Sci-Fi that barrels along at break-neck speed. The planets are beyond your wildest dreams and the villains are from your darkest nightmares! Plus, Space Opera doesn't care or worry about explaining the science. You don't need to know how a hyperdrive works,

just that your starship can go faster than light and reach the far side of the galaxy in time to stop the vile Zahn from destroying Capal II!

So what do you get for your hard-earned cash? Well, you'll get strong arms

for one, as Starblazer Adventures is a whopping 632 page, giant-sized, hard-backed tome (it weighs just under 1 and 3/4 kilos)! This book is massive! It is also superbly illustrated throughout with panels and pages taken straight from issues of Starblazer. Also, you get a very comprehensive and excellent set of rules, as well of loads of background, advice on how to run game and a history of the Starblazer comics.

Starblazer Adventures, like a lot of games nowadays, makes use of the Open Game License that Wizards of the Coast pioneered and has lead to their near dominance of the market. Unlike other games, however, Starblazer Adventures is not using Wizards' (forgive me) clunky D20 system. Instead, Birch and Newman settled on the very successful Fate system.

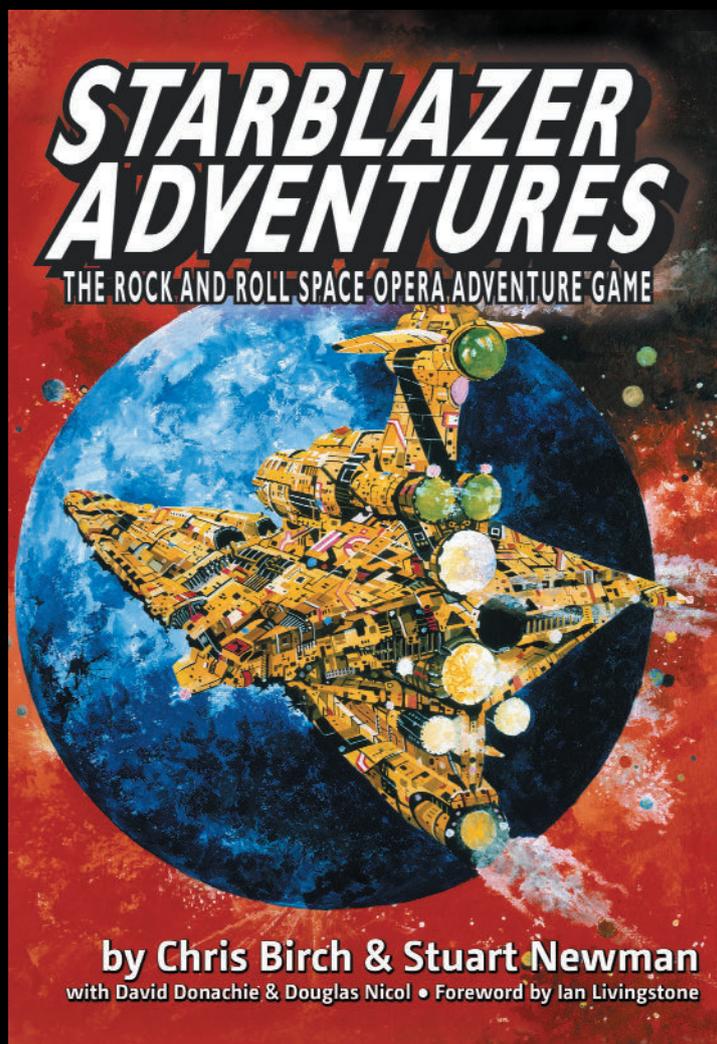
The Fate system has been around for a few years, originally bursting on to the roleplaying scene with Spirit Of The Century, a 1920s inspired pulp adventure game, which I will review at some later point. The beauty and elegance of the Fate system is that it is not bogged down in rules. "Hang on." I hear you say, "If it's not bogged down in rules then why is the rulebook so big?" Stay with me, faithful reader, and all shall be revealed.

The book kicks off, interestingly, with a very nice foreword by Ian Livingstone. Yes, THE Ian Livingstone of Fighting

Fantasy fame. (He seems to be taking over Mass Movement lately.) An unusual choice you might think, but when you consider that Livingstone and Jackson did more for the British and European roleplaying industry than anyone else it quickly makes sense - and what an accolade.

Next, there is the ubiquitous explanation of what roleplaying is, followed by a brief overview of Starblazer Adventures and the Fate system. What then follows are the rules for character creation before heading into the bulk of the main rules. And there are a lot of them. Not so much numerous and contradictory rules for this and that and an eternal number of alien abilities and psionic powers, but more of an in-depth look at how to use the Fate rules to cover all manner of situations; for once you understand the Fate system it is pretty much one mechanic that seamlessly applies to anything you want to do.

The basic mechanic of the Fate system is the tried and tested difficulty number. You want to achieve something, the Game Master assigns a difficulty number, you roll the dice, add any bonuses from Skills, Stunts and Aspects and if you beat it, viola, success! How much you beat the difficulty number gives what is termed 'Spin', which means you may get extra information, add some additional damage or get a bonus to you next roll. The difficulty numbers are summarised on 'The Ladder, which has numbers ranging from +8 to -3. In addition, each number is given a noun to describe its status on The Ladder. For example, +8 is Legendary, whereas -3 is Abysmal and 0 is



Mediocre. This just adds colour to the GM's description. It is far more exciting to be told that to achieve that trick shot to deactivate the Venu's diabolical super weapon is a 'Legendary action' rather than "you need an 8."

A minor deviation from the regular Fate rules, and for my money all for the good, is that whereas other Fate games use specialist six-sided Fate dice, Starblazer Adventures uses two good-old, trusty, regular six-sided die of different colours. The player nominates one colour as the positive and the other as the negative and rolls them at the same time. He then takes the negative die's result away from the positive to give him or her a score between -5 to +5, with most scores averaging around -1 to +1. What this means is that, due to the laws of probability, it is very hard to get a really high roll and, conversely, a really bad roll - but when you do it's a very special moment.

What Fate does better than any other roleplaying game I have come across, however, is it really promotes 'roleplaying' over 'roll playing'; i.e. players playing their characters rather than rolling dice, something I strongly support. In fact, the entire system is geared to getting the players and the Game Master (here, aptly called the Storyteller) to promote the story and drive the plot forward. This is achieved by the mechanic of Fate points (hence the system's name) and Aspects.

Fate points are not an entirely new concept, but in Fate their use is radically different to that of other systems. Every character of import, i.e. the player characters and major non-player characters have a certain number of Fate points. In addition, ships or vehicles, as well as locations such as space stations and planets also have Fate points. These can be spent to achieve certain effects, the most basic is to add a simple +1 modifier to a dice roll when attempting an action. The others are to slightly take control of a scene by making a 'declaration', power a Stunt, or you can activate, or 'invoke', an Aspect, but more on that in a moment.

Firstly, let me explain this notion of 'Declarations'. By spending a Fate point a player can make a minor declaration that will change the situation so it is slightly in their favour. What that means is that, say, during a fight the player's character finds himself without a weapon. Rather than face his foes unarmed, he spends a Fate point and makes a declaration that a broken piece of chair leg or a dropped weapon is in easy reach. Or when the player characters walk into the space bar one of them happens to know one of the patrons or even the owner of the bar. This makes the players and the GM really think on their feet, but also helps to engage the players, as they feel that they can directly influence the game world and thereby the plot. Of course, if the player's declaration is too far fetched, "Yeah, I know Darth Vader. His real name is Jeff. He doesn't like trays. We were... at school together.", the GM is within his rights to refuse it.

Another use of Fate points is that some of the more powerful Stunts require you to spend a point to gain their benefits. Stunts are derived from a character's skills and are chosen during character creation. Where Skills, such as Fists, Drive and Investigation, are quite general, purely detailing your areas of experience, stunts have a greater but more specific effect. Any Skill taken has a rating of +1 or more and if you don't have that Skill then it automatically defaults to Mediocre or 0. You can only have Stunts that are directly related to a Skill that you taken.

The other and most important way to spend a Fate point is to invoke an Aspect. Now, Aspects, as I have mentioned already, are the other game me-

chanic that separates this game from the plethora of other systems. An Aspect is a short sentence that describes a quality or trait of a character. They are almost like bullet points, in that they give an insight into the character's personality, motivations or history. For example, one of my players gave his character the Aspect of 'No One Is Expendable'. During our game, if you think that an Aspect is applicable to a situation you have the option to 'invoke' it by spending a Fate point. This will then give you a +2 bonus to your result. The best Aspects are those that can be positive and negative. Why do you want to have a negative Aspect? Because you will quickly run out of Fate points and having an Aspect that has the potential to be negative means that the GM can 'invoke' that Aspect to compel your character to act a certain way, or choose the more rash course of action. At the same time he offers the player a Fate point. The player doesn't have to accept the compel, but if he refuses he doesn't earn the point and has to pay one of his points in order to overcome it. Taking the example I gave above of my player's Aspect of 'No One Is Expendable', during our game and near the climax of the adventure, I compelled the player's character, Hank Deschain, to risk his life to save a security guard (a minor NPC) from being sucked out into space when all Hank wanted to do was escape. Of course, at the time he had no Fate points left to buy off the compel and so he had no choice but to try and save the poor security guard's life. The bonus of this was that it developed the plot and provided a really heroic moment.

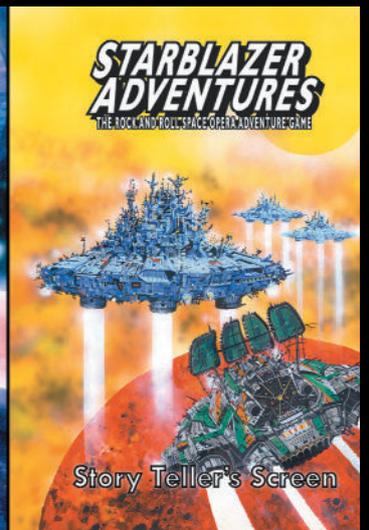
Another use of Fate points is that character's can give other characters one of their Fate points. In order to do so they must interact with them in some manner that would rationalise it. By this we mean that they maybe give them a rousing, encouraging speech, or maybe kiss the other character luck.

By now, I hope I've illustrated how crucial Fate points are as a mechanic of the game and how much fun it is seeing them flying back and forth across the table. It is even more fun as players realise that they only have a finite number. Fortunately, at the start of each session the players have their characters' Fate points 'refreshed' to their starting value. Of course, they've then got survive that session, while at the same time asking themselves are they that desperate that they're willing to take the Fate point the GM is offering them? And why is he smiling like that?

Another interesting mechanic of the game is damage. Characters, in fact starships, space stations and organisations etc. all have two Stress Tracks; one for Physical damage and the other, Composure, for emotional and psychological damage. Ships, however, have Structural and Systems. As characters etc. take damage you cross off the amount inflicted on their Stress Track. Once all the boxes are filled the character is 'Taken Out' and his fate is decided by whoever dealt the fatal blow. Fortunately, you can trade in damage on your Stress Track by taking a Consequence. A Consequence is a temporary Aspect, such as 'It's Just a Flesh Wound' or 'I Think I Cracked A Rib!' As such, Consequences can be compelled (or tagged) just like any other Aspect to make things harder for the victim.

A Minor Consequence will absorb 2 points of Stress, a Major Consequence - 4 points, Severe - 6 points and Extreme - 8 points. However, you can only ever have a total of 3 Consequences no matter what level they are and each one must be of a higher value than the last, so it's no good taking an Extreme Consequence straight away.

So, Character Creation, which I must say is very enjoyable and can take an entire gaming session (or two, as we found out). Firstly, it is not a case of just randomly rolling some dice to ascertain your character's stat profile, as, for one thing, characters don't have a stat profile! That's right, gang, you read



that correctly, there are NO stats! Instead characters, starships, and practically everything are defined by three things: Aspects, Skills and Stunts. The lengthy part is developing your Starblazer Legend. Once you have an idea for your character you define his early days, where he began, what training he had etc. from that you create 2 Aspects. Next you come up with his 'Legend', which is the title of his very own Starblazer adventure and write a few brief lines defining the plot. For example, Blaze Falcon And The Spider Gods From Beyond Time! From this you write down another 2 Aspects. Next, is your Guest Star role. By writing your characters' names down on separate pieces of paper and randomly drawing them, each player finds out which other players' Starblazer Legend they have guest-starred in. You add a few lines to their synopsis, detailing your character's role and create another 2 Aspects. You then repeat the Guest Star process again and create another 2 Aspects. For a standard campaign you'd stop there, as you'd have 8 Aspects, and move on to the next step. If you wanted a gritty campaign, you'd stop at the Starblazer Legend stage and begin with only 6 Aspects. If you wanted a heroic level adventure you'd do another round and have 10 Aspects. What this does is immediately establish the bonds between the characters and, hopefully, the reasons why they adventure together and why they are willing to risk their lives for each other. Next, depending on the level of campaign you're playing, you have a certain number of points to spend on skills and a defined number Stunts; 15 points and 3 Stunts for a gritty, 20 points and 4 Stunts for a standard and 35 points and 5 Stunts for a heroic. When it comes to choosing Skills players must follow the Skill pyramid, which basically means if you take a Skill at one level you must have one more skill at the level beneath it. So, if you took one Skill at Great +4, you must have at least two Skills at Good +3, and three at Fair +2.

To work out how many of the all-important Fate points you have you minus the number of Stunts away from 10. Any equipment is not bought, but essentially within reason. If you can justify to the Game Master why your character would have that piece of highly classified equipment then you can have it. Some weapons, it should be noted require you to have certain Stunts to be able to legally access them.

The rest of the book provides a wealth of information for the GM. It covers how to perform practically any action, Starship travel and battles, how to create planets, organisations, robots, aliens, monsters and anything else your diseased mind can imagine. There is also a massive amount of background for a different campaign settings and adventure ideas, all derived from the original comics. There is a very extensive section giving advice to novice and experienced Game Masters and a comprehensive history of the Starblazer comics. Lastly, this mighty tome is rounded off with a very handy rules summary, useful table and the essential character sheet, as well as ones for starships and organisations.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this lengthy examination of Starblazer Adventures, I love this game. That's not to say I didn't have my reservations. Being an old-school roleplayer I admit that I found that the Fate system took a while to get my head around. Not because it's difficult to understand, but because it is SO different from the more 'traditional' games. A big initial stumbling block was that characters don't have a stat profile - there's no strength or dexterity or intelligence. There's no Hit or Wounds total to keep track of damage. There's no defined equipment list, as if it is reasonable that your character should have a piece of equipment then he's got it. If it's not listed on his sheet then he can always spend a Fate point and bingo, look what I've found. In fact, and this is the crux of the matter, the whole idea of players influencing the game in such away was quite daunting. I'm a control freak and here is a game that takes away some of the GM's omnipotent power! After the initial shock, I decided to embrace the concept and see where it took myself and my gaming group. Let me just say it was some of

the most fun gaming ever and really developed the concept of collaborative storytelling. I admit I do have one minor niggles with the Fate system and that is that an argument or an attempt to persuade a character should be run as a conflict, much like a combat, with the character taking Composure Stress and Consequences. My problem is that I have always preferred this sort of encounter to be roleplayed and not determined by the roll of the dice and the expenditure of a Fate point. In fact, if a player made a good case I would often not even have a Fellowship role or whatever and just have the NPC acquiesce. My way of dealing with for Starblazer Adventures is that if the player's argument or reasoning was particularly poor to give the resisting character a bonus to their role and if the player argued well to give him the bonus. Of course, I may well just ignore those rules all together. Hey! It's my game and I am GOD!

Starblazer Players' comments

Craig

Starblazer in a single word is AWESOME. The Fate system it uses is excellent and really makes you feel a part of the world. There is so much that you, as a player, can do with it to affect the game and the world around you. When it was initially explained to me it sounded quite confusing, but, once you start actually using it, it feels very intuitive and natural moves the game along at quite a pace. The level of possibilities and paths you may take as a

player through using this system gets you really involved in the game world making it very immersive and a lot of fun. I imagine this can make things very tricky for the GM, who will have to try and keep up with the way the story is being changed and evolving because of the players.

This is the most fun I think I have had roleplaying ever. I even enjoyed the combat. Generally, I tend to find combat a little dull, almost impeding the story and problem solving, which I find the most fun. This is because, I enjoy the character development and thought processes of the game and combat tends to be less about that and more about dice rolls and numbers on a piece of paper. With the Fate system, there's still numbers on paper, which is fine, after all, you need combat rules, however your character's Aspects and those of the surrounding locale also play a large part. This means your character's personality can play a large part rather than being suddenly pushed to the side so a combat mechanic can temporarily take over. Also, the combat system is fluid and smooth, and, like the rest of the game, very involving with aspects being 'tagged' to aid you in the fight or alter the outcome completely. An example of this, we were getting a good kicking our enemy we'd discerned was a 'gambling man,

which meant spending a fate point and challenging him, betting he couldn't beat us without the help of the robots surrounding us inspired him to take them out (which is handy when you're being sucked out a window into the vacuum of space). It works both ways of course, aspects of ours as players could be 'tagged' to hinder us in the battle and provide an edge to the villains. Either way, fun fun fun.

Before you can get to playing the game there is a long process of character creation. I think we spent 2 full sessions creating our characters, and this equated to about 8 hours creating a background which generates aspects then creating a comic book style story, which generates aspects, then another story, which generates aspects, then featuring other characters into the comic book stories and so on..... Three of us were creating characters so the more you have involved the longer it will take. This is the first time we had used this system which explains the length of time as we tried to get our heads round what was happening. Character creation in itself is a enjoyable and very involving. It helps you to get your head around the fate system as you gain aspects from the scenarios you create. There are some standard character templates to use I think, but I would recommend building from scratch as



it is fun and helps with understanding the game especially if you are new to the system or roleplaying in general.

In conclusion, I love Starblazer. I would recommend it to anyone. RP veterans and newbies alike will have a lot of fun playing this game. The system at first is a little daunting but character creation makes a lot of sense of it. Be warned however, everything else will never be good enough again!

Will

This game rocks! If you have an imagination, you can play this game. If you have ever enjoyed a story, you can play this game.

I still consider myself a relative newcomer to the world of roleplaying with less to compare this to than other members of our merry band but my GOODNESS this was fun. The whole system seems predisposed to emphasise the story and roleplaying nature of these games and with that kept in mind the whole game flew by in a whirlwind of witty repartee and outlandish daring-do. The presence of Aspects which you could act on, be it willingly or unwillingly, really pushes the story along and helps craft your character every time you use them. They represent your character's past, their hopes their fears; the essence of what and who they are. This being the case, coming up with the various aspects in the initial creation process took a little longer than we expected but then again it was the first time any of us had used this system so next time we'll know what we need to worry about and what we don't. In hindsight I think we didn't need to worry quite so much about the relative importance of the aspects as you soon discover through play which aspects are good for the story and which aren't quite so key. Conversely, the opportunity can arise during play to replace one aspect with another which really breathes life into the game. A further great part of the creation process is coming up with stories that feature your character as well as guest appearances from the other members of your group - it can take time to get used to

this but my gosh it's worth it. It's another example of how this game embeds you within the heart your character and also those of your group. Fate Points are also well worth a mention since they give the opportunity to use your aspects as well as alter the course of the story through the use of Declarations. Putting the course of the story in the hands of the players really boosts the level of involvement in the game and draws the player in still further. Although I am still new to this world of imaginary games and characters, I have a feeling that those created through the fate system will be the ones that will get under my skin the deepest and that is what I like most about this game. In short: can't recommend it highly enough; can't wait to play again.

Mindjammer: Starblazer Adventures in the Second Age of Space.
By Sarah Newton.

Mindjammer is a complete sourcebook and campaign setting for Starblazer Adventures. Like the main rulebook it is lavishly illustrated throughout with black and white art from the Starblazer comics. As the subtitle suggests, Mindjammer is set in the Second Age of Space, and unlike a lot of other Sci-Fi game settings is not a bleak, humanity is on the brink of extinction setting. In fact, things are quite bright for the human race (makes a nice change).

Starblazer Adventures
ISBN: 9780955542336
Amazon: £28.73
DriveThruRPG: \$29.99 (PDF only)

Mindjammer
ISBN: 9781907204128
£19.87
Amazon: £16.20

Brady Webb

FOLLOWING LAST ISSUE'S FEATURE, AND GIVEN THE SUBJECTS OF THE INTERVIEW THAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ, THANKS TO THE SMASHING FOLKS AT ICON BOOKS, WE'VE GOT FIVE COPIES OF BOTH 'HOUSE OF HELL' AND 'EYE OF THE DRAGON' (THE LATEST FIGHTING FANTASY RE-PRINTS) TO GIVE AWAY TO FIVE LUCKY SOULS WHO CAN CORRECTLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION, A PUZZLE SET BY THE DUNGEON'S MASTER HIMSELF...

Q: THE BLOOD BEAST, THE ICONIC MONSTER FROM DEATHTRAP DUNGEON, HAS ONE WEAKNESS, WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DEFENSE HAS IT DEVELOPED TO COUNTER IT?

THINK YOU KNOW? THEN SEND YOUR ANSWER, VIA EMAIL, TO [INFO@MASSMOVEMENT.CO.UK](mailto:info@massmovement.co.uk) WITH 'FIGHTING FANTASY COMPETITION' AS THE SUBJECT OF YOUR ELECTRONIC SCROLL...



STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE

The Dungeon's Master meets Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone

In the history of role playing games there are two men who stand held and shoulders with the greats. Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone not only founded Games Workshop, but brought RPGs to these shores; as well as creating one of the most enduring and unique fantasy book series ever... Fighting Fantasy! So it was that I, the Dungeon's Master, found myself in the privileged position to interview two legends of the industry (and I didn't use torture once! Well, maybe a little)!

Interview by Brady Webb

copy, we were dismayed. It was impossible to follow what was going on. No winner. No end to the game. One player didn't even 'play' in the traditional sense! Was it even a game at all? And no rules on combat – you were referred to a set of medieval battle rules for tabletop wargaming called 'Chainmail'. We couldn't make any sense of it. But then we discovered a D&D gaming group at City University in London lead by Andrew Holt and Steve Biggs. They showed us how it worked and that was an moment of epiphany. Our lives would never be the same again...

Ian: I remember spending days designing my first dungeon on graph paper. It was called Temple of the Golden Skeleton. I still have it today I'm pleased to say. I also remember 'rolling' my first character. He was a barbarian called



MM: You are friends from your school days; please describe how you met and what your first impressions of each other were?

Ian: I can't actually remember how we met. But we soon found out that we shared a big interest in wargaming and Subbuteo.

Steve: Maybe Ian doesn't want to admit it – we used to go to the same pub! We had some mutual friends who played together in a jamming blues band. We joined in. Ian played harmonica (still does) and I play guitar.

MM: At what age were you when you first discovered the world of role-playing games and how did you first stumble upon them?

Ian: I was 25 and Steve was 23. It was 1975 and the early days of Games Workshop. We'd heard about this amazing new role-playing game that had just come out in the USA called Dungeons & Dragons. At around that time a copy of Owl & Weasel found its way into the hands of Gary Gyax whose company TSR published Dungeons & Dragons. He sent us a copy of D&D and we were soon hooked. We ordered six copies and ended up with a three year exclusive distribution agreement for Europe!

MM: What was your first experience of role-playing like? Are there any moments that are especially memorable?

Steve: We'd heard about Dungeons & Dragons - the term 'role-playing games' hadn't come into existence yet – but when we got our hands on a

Anvar. Sadly he is no longer with us...

MM: You both founded Games Workshop together, along with fellow friend John Peake. Is it true that you all shared a flat together in Shepherd's Bush? What made you decide to found the company, how did you come up with the name and what was the original vision for the company?

Steve: All three of us were bored with our jobs - and indeed our existence in a poky rented flat. So, one drunken night we decided we were going to change our lives. We'd start up our own business. But what in? We all had an interest in games. But what would we do? So we decided to publish a monthly fanzine, sell obscure games, do game-related services. John was a talented woodworker. He came back from a holiday in Greece with a backgammon set and made a perfect copy. He also liked the Japanese game of Go and made a Go board. These were professional quality and Ian, the salesman of the three, manages to sell John's games into Just Games and Harrods. Hence the name 'Games WORKSHOP'. But when D&D came along and it was obvious what direction GW was taking, John lost interest and left. He didn't enjoy playing D&D at all.

MM: You published a magazine called 'Owl & Weasel'; was this your first foray into publishing? Where did the title 'Owl & Weasel' come



from?

Ian: We had started Games Workshop but nobody knew we existed. So we decided to tell the world about Workshop by publishing Owl & Weasel. In February 1975 we mailed out the first issue free to everybody we knew in games hoping that they would subscribe. Luckily quite a few did subscribe but the circulation always remained in the low hundreds. The name was supposed to represent the characteristics of a good games player; the owl is wise and the weasel is cunning. But after 25 issues it was time for a change. And that was White Dwarf.

MM: In 1976 you went to GenCon, the role-playing convention in Lake Geneva, USA, to get exclusive deals to European distribution deals. That convention also happened to be the event first funded by TSR to support the growing popularity of their game D&D. What do you remember of that convention, whom did you meet and what was it like trying persuade companies like TSR to give a deal?

Steve: It was a very amateurish affair, with tressle tables and sheets for covers. Games packaged in zip-locked bags selling for \$10 a time (very expensive, but the publishers could only afford short print runs) For us it was a turning point. We got to meet Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson and Brian Blume, along with many of the other future big names in the hobby like Mark Miller (Traveller). But at this stage they were all garage companies, who were delighted to think that their obscure games were going to be sold in Europe. We

were the only Europeans at the show and so we signed up the entire industry!

Ian: I remember it took a long time to get there! We decided to see a lot of the USA on the way! We landed in New York; we being myself, Steve, Steve's sister Vicky and her friend Jane. We drove to Los Angeles along Route 66, to deliver a Buick Skylark. We dropped that off and picked up another car to San Francisco. We then delivered another to Chicago and eventually reached Lake Geneva, Wisconsin in time for GenCon. It was a memorable journey and made our arrival at GenCon all the more amazing. We met Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and loads of other designers and writers. We already had the TSR distributorship and had been doing well with D&D. All the new role-playing companies were keen to get us to distribute their games too.

MM: In 1978 you opened your first Games Workshop store in Hammersmith; what were the early days of the company and running a shop like?

Ian: The main reason we decided to open our own store was because we were having trouble getting other retailers to stock role-playing games. They just didn't get it. All the rule books, supplements, figures, dice, etc was a nightmare for non-specialist retailers. But for us it just seemed like a natural extension of our mail order and distribution business to have a flagship store. Tucked away in a side street in Hammersmith, the first store became a gam-

ing Mecca for role-players, some of whom travelled hundreds of miles to visit us. Steve and I had our office above the store and usually worked behind the counter on Saturdays. There was always a great feeling of excitement in the store and we felt very lucky to have turned our hobby into a business. We were far from being the best retailers in the world but our knowledge and enthusiasm for D&D rubbed off and the games began to sell themselves! They were great times.

MM: 1980 you came up with the idea for the first Fighting Fantasy novel, the legendary 'Warlock of Firetop Mountain'. How did you come up with the concept and what was it like writing the first books, especially as you were both running GW at the time? Is there anything you would have done differently?

Steve: Those were balmy days. How our girlfriends stuck with us through 1982-86, I'll never know. Up at 7, off to Games Workshop for a day at the office. Home at 7-8pm. Then typing away until midnight, working on the next FF book. Anything different? Perhaps we should have published the FF books ourselves (i.e. GW). That would have given the company the mass market game we were always looking for. But we couldn't actually foresee how successful they were going to be. And by that time, we were well and truly in bed with Penguin.

MM: Steve, you're responsible for the first of the FF books that weren't fantasy based, moving into the realms of horror (House of Hell, which I still haven't beaten!), Sci-fi (Starship Traveller) and superheroes (Appointment With F.E.A.R.), as well as creating the Sorcery series. What made you want to step outside the safe boundaries of the fantasy genre and what was the readers' response like?

Steve: I was keen to take the idea to different genres. After I'd written a few fantasy adventures I wanted to see where else we could go. In retrospect I think fantasy was the best genre; it suited the game system best. But I was having fun trying a multi-part adventure (Sorcery), horror (House of Hell), superheroes (Appointment with FEAR) etc.

MM: Ian, with Steve forging into new genres for the FF books, you continued to explore the world of Titan. How did you create the world and what influenced you? Did you discuss with each other any new additions or directions that you wanted to take?

Ian: I wanted to keep all my adventures in a one world, Titan, and particularly within Allansia. The plan was to build a fantasy world and introduce people, places, legends, characters, races, monsters and history that would be consistent and recognisable in many of my books to try to build up some familiarity. Hence recurring characters like Yaztromo became popular. I did stray away from Titan once with Freeway Fighter!

MM: What character, race and continent are your favourites?

Steve: I liked the little Jib-JJib that you encounter in Sorcery. When you enter its lair you hear this ferocious roar and fear for your life. But turns out it's a small furry creature which is not dangerous at all. Its bark is worse than its bite.

Ian: My favourite character has to be the grand old wizard of Darkwood Forest, Yaztromo. Favourite race are Lizard Men and favourite continent is Allansia.

MM: Which of the FF books are your favourite and why?

Ian: Warlock of Firetop Mountain because it was the first and gave us a great sense of pride. Death-trap Dungeon because it was a great dungeon bash and gave readers a bit of a moral dilemma when they were obliged to fight to the death a friendly NPC called Throm. City of Thieves because of the story and the atmosphere of Port Blacksand. **Steve:** Has to be the Sorcery series since I put so much time and effort into those books. But Warlock will always have a special place for me since it was the first.

MM: The FF world is populated with numerous races of a near unending variety, as chronicled in the excellent 'Out of the Pit'. However, are there any creatures that you look back and say to yourselves, "What was I thinking?"

Ian: Actually I quite liked most of my monsters! They were mostly created to fit a specific purpose or scenario. But there was one in Armies of Death.... It was a chubby dog-headed human with a blowpipe. I called it a Blog. Not quite like the blogs of today's internet generation. **Steve:** The Wheelies in Citadel of Chaos. Ouch!

MM: Other writers were brought on board, along with Marc Gascoigne who went on to become the series editor, to help your workload. How involved were you from that point and did you have the final say? Were there any ideas that were proposed that you just thought "No way!" and if so, what were they? **Steve:** We did have final say, but Marc was well tuned in to our own vision of the series. We all shared a com-

mon view.

MM: The Fighting Fantasy novels were brilliant fun. What inspired you to take the world of Titan into the realm of the prose novel? The principal character of Chadda Darkmane first appeared in 'The Trolltooth Wars'; what influences, if any, were there on this character's conception? Are there any other tales that you wanted to tell and if so, do you think that you will ever be lured back to the world of Titan for either a novel or a new gamebook?



Steve: Trolltooth Wars was the book that took me longest to complete. Very different from writing a gamebook, that's for sure. Originally I'd intended that Trolltooth Wars would provide the solution to Warlock of Firetop Mountain. The solution had not been published anywhere, and there was no Internet for people to post up their own solutions. I thought it would be neat to have Darkmane follow the 'one true way' through Firetop Mountain. So anyone who was inclined to could work out how to solve the original book. But when I submitted it to Penguin, the Editor said the book seemed completely unbalanced. The beginning and end were relatively short, with this whole great long Firetop Mountain episode in the middle. It didn't work. So back to the typewriter. I finished the book off whilst I was living in Spain, and it was all written on a new-fangled – and very expensive – gadget that I was in love with. A word processor. How I wished these things had been around in 1980...!

MM: After stepping back from the FF books and eventually leaving GW, you both have forged very successful careers in other areas. Steve, in the '90s you devised a number of very successful interactive telephone games, such as 'F.I.S.T.' as well as 'Battlecards', a collectible card game, and moved into journalism and game design. In addition, you are a Honorary Professor at Brunel University teaching a course in Digital Game Design. Ian, you have gone on to have one of the most influential careers in computer gaming, being involved on such incredible franchises as Tomb Raider and Hitman, to name but two, and have earned an OBE. Considering that you are both now so heavily involved in the worlds of computer gaming, how do you see computer games developing in the years to come and Fighting Fantasy's place in the market? Also, considering that computer games have eclipsed tabletop role-playing in popularity?

Steve: No question the future is in digital games. The size of the market is enormous, and board games have unfortunately become very much a niche market. The future will see constant expansion of games into all walks of life. We've seen console gaming become a multi-billion dollar industry, yet iApp games sell for 59p. And free-to-play Facebook-type games are making millions. Huh?? Gaming has become a creative area of the entertainment industry like music and movies. Who'd have thought that in 1976 when we were wandering around GenCon with 100 other bearded hippies equally as hooked on games as we were. It's been a fantastic journey

Ian: The games world is growing rapidly. Advances in technology allow new ways of delivering and playing games. Computer and video games is now the largest entertainment industry in the world. It is estimated that global revenues from games will exceed £50 billion, yes BILLION, by 2015. Diverse content available on diverse platforms, both online and offline means that 70% of the UK population now plays games of some type. The important thing is that games have become much more socially acceptable and there is

something for everybody to play. Fighting Fantasy might not have the audience it used to have in book format but Warlock of Firetop Mountain and Deathtrap Dungeon are available as Apps on iPhone. That's pretty cool.

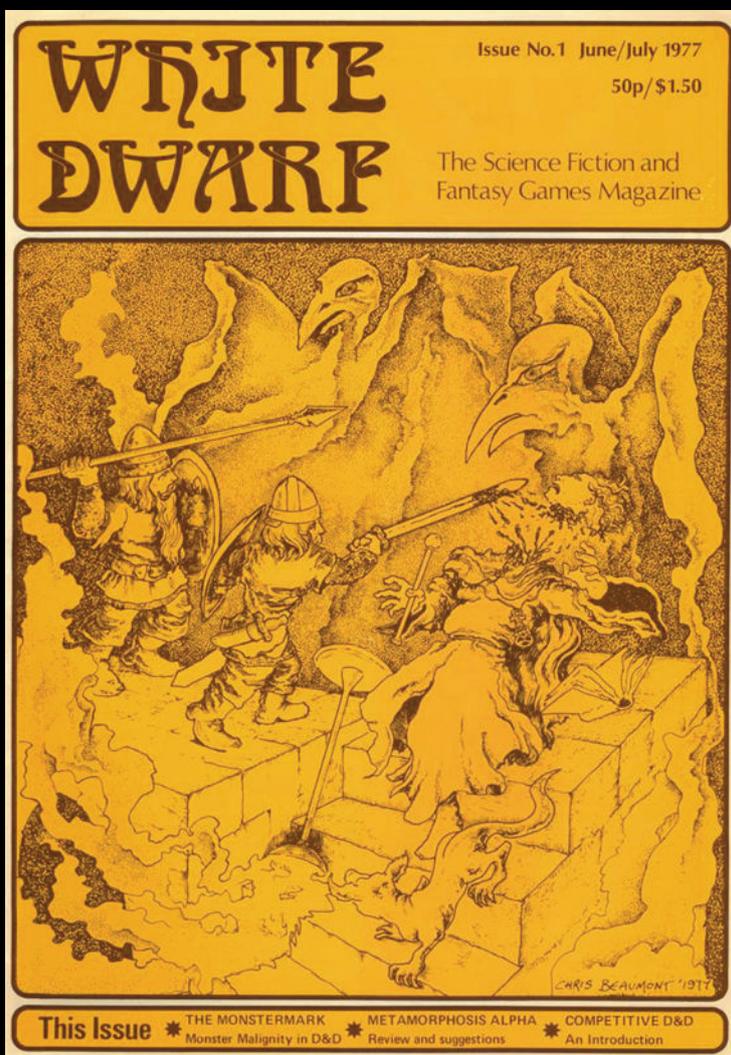
MM: I understand that you still meet up for regularly and play board games, which you call the 'Games Night Pro' and compete for an annual trophy, the 'Pagoda Cup'. How long have you been holding this night, and what is your favourite board game and why? Also, who has won the cup the most and has anyone been caught cheating? Do you, or are you ever tempted, to play any role-playing games? If so, what is your favourite genre and what games do you play?

Ian: The Games Night Club has been running since 1986. There are six members and we meet usually every two weeks at 'The Club'. The members are myself, Steve, Peter Molyneux, Clive Robert, Mark Spangenthal and Skye Quin. It is very much a spoof of a Gentleman's Club. As Secretary, I arrange the meetings, keep score on the night and publish the Games Night Newsletter in which I berate the members and report on the games played. I am currently publishing issue 343. Points are given for every game played, double if it qualifies as a 'game of substance' which is one that lasts over two hours and causes headaches. At the end of the year, the person at the top of the league table wins the Pagoda Cup and gets their name engraved on it. I am pleased to say that I have won it the most times. Let's say there have been a couple of incidents over the years that could be termed mild cheating but the perpetrators shall remain nameless. They know who they are. But as a result a new phrase entered our language called 'the practice roll.' We only play board games or card games. Our current favourite is Caylus although it is only 5-player which means we need one of us to be away. As for RPGs, well at our age we feel far too self-conscious to play them.

MM: Lastly, what projects do you have coming up that you think we should really be looking out for?

Ian: At Eidos I continue to put my finger in everybody else's pie. By that I mean that I work with our studios adding creative input. Just Cause 2 recently came out and reached No.1 in the charts. Kane & Lynch 2 will be our next release. I've also recently invested in a couple of start-up companies that are making social games although I can't really talk about them right now. I'm also involved with Socialgo.com, a solution that allows people to build their own private social networks and monetize them should they wish.

Steve: You may be aware that a movie producer, Superteam Productions have just bought an Option to turn House of Hell into a movie. But more than a movie it will be playable on-line and via Blu-Ray. This is an exciting project. There's a long way to go yet. But if it is successful, where could it go? Remember there are 70+ other books in the FF series...!



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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

It's no secret that D&D has been a part of my life for over a quarter of a century, so when, in email conversation, Charles at Esdevium mentioned that there was a possibility of getting an interview with one of the R&D Team (that's right folks, Dungeons & Dragons has a Research & Development Team – number three on my list of dream jobs), I leapt at the chance, and after a little too and fro in cyberspace, the following interview with Mike Mearls was set up and ready to go. Six weeks later and I'm still smiling...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

MM: Let's start at the beginning... Do you want to introduce yourself and tell us how you originally became involved in the world of , and started playing, D&D?

Mike: My name is Mike Mearls and I am lead designer on D&D. I was first exposed to D&D in 1981, when my older brother and his friends discovered it. Perhaps by coincidence, or maybe it was simply a cultural shift, I also had my first taste of Tolkien, Conan, and fantasy literature. D&D was my chance to explore a world of fantasy and magic, and I dove into it head first. I wasn't allowed to play with D&D with my brother and his friends, but they didn't remain involved with the game for long. Soon after they gave it up, my brother sold me his Basic D&D rulebook. The rest is history.

MM: For the sake of those poor souls reading this who may not be familiar with D&D, would you like to briefly explain, from an industry insiders perspective, what Dungeons & Dragons is?

Mike: Dungeons & Dragons is a cooperative game where each player creates a character, a sort of in-game avatar, such as a wizard, an elf, or a warrior. The players team up to defeat monsters in a fantasy setting that looks something like the Lord of the Rings. The big difference between D&D and other games is that in D&D one player takes on the role of the Dungeon Master (DM). The DM creates the fantasy world and builds scenarios for the players to tackle. The DM adjudicates the rules like a referee, allowing the players to try almost any action. While the rules cover a lot, the DM's judgment is the final arbiter. This makes games of D&D interesting because there are no limits aside from common sense and logic to what the characters can do. For instance, let's say that a ferocious ogre guards the entrance to a treasure chamber in the ruins of an imperial palace. The players could attack the ogre, but they could also try any number of other plans. They might offer it a keg of ale they found elsewhere in the palace ruins, hoping that it gets drunk and falls asleep. One character could challenge the ogre to a contest of riddles while another one sneaks past it. The characters could pretend to be allied with the ogre's master and bluster their way past it. The players are free to try anything they can think of. The DM is a big reason why after 36 years D&D is still around. Like a musical instrument, D&D shifts and changes in response to what a DM wants to do with it. Some DMs create vivid, detail fantasy worlds for their players to explore. Others build devious puzzles and traps for the characters to overcome.

MM: How did you make the transition from gamer to becoming part of the Dungeons & Dragons R&D team? Can you tell us a little about role of the R&D team, what it does and what you do within the team?

Mike: The R&D team is broken into three primary components. The designers are responsible for the creative spark that drives the game forward. They come up with new concepts for characters, new worlds to explore, and new ideas for the game. As lead designer, I set some of the big picture goals for the design team. The developers take the designers' work and ensure that it fits in with the game as it currently stands. They make sure that everything is balanced so that new options don't make old ones obsolete. At the same time, a new option has to be powerful and interesting enough that it's worth a player's time to look at them. The editors take the developed manuscript and

work to make sure that the game is clear, easy to understand, and precise in its language. By keeping the phrasing of rules consistent from release to release, they cut down rules confusion.

MM: Do you have to separate and differentiate between being a gamer and a developer when working on new ideas? Does being a gamer help, or is it a hindrance to, working on D&D as a game? Why?

Mike: Obviously, you'd need to have some interest in games to work on D&D. Otherwise, you wouldn't have enough of the basics under your belt to do interesting work. You'd have to spend a lot of time catching up. The biggest benefit, though, lies in understanding the audience. D&D players like that they can bend and shift the game to fit what they want to do. For DMs, the game is a creative outlet. Having experience playing D&D makes it a lot easier to understand what players want and need. My rule of thumb is that I don't put anything in a book I'm working on unless I'd personally be interested in it. That's a good first test to see if an idea is worth pursuing.

MM: I'm assuming that you're directly responsible for all the minor and major changes within the D&D core system and rules, so I was kind of wondering, what changes, or additional rules were, and are, you directly responsible for? What impact, as an individual, have you had on D&D, and how do you think your changes have affected the game?

Mike: Most of my design work has come out from *Player's Handbook 2* onward. I think my biggest contributions have been the class design in *PH 2* and the system of psionic magic we introduced in *Player's Handbook 3*. I like taking the core 4th edition system and twisting, turning, and bending it in new directions. It's fun showing how you can take what looks like a relatively static, predictable system and turn it on its head. I don't think people expected that.

MM: I guess the change that's still big news is the move to, and release of the 4th Edition Rules – how long did it take to develop, play test and refine the system before you, and the rest of the team, were happy for it to be released? What were the biggest problems that you guys faced during the development of 4thE, and how did you eventually overcome them? With hindsight, is there anything that you'd change about 4th E if you could?

Mike: The first work on 4e started in 2005, and I was intermittently involved in it from then until 2006. For the final year of the game's design I worked on it full-time.

The biggest challenge was finding the right balance between making the game appealing to existing players while finding ways to make it more accessible to new players. It's easy to get lost in catering to your existing fans. They've seen all the basics and want to see more detail, more options, just more stuff in general. You have to fight that urge and remember that the game has to provide an easy route for new players. It's also easy to fall into the trap of creating a rule for every situation. That causes the game to become too complex to play easily. On the other hand, too few rules mean that DMs and players are stuck guessing or arguing over how something works. Finding that balance is an important part of developing a new version of D&D.

There are a few things I'd change, but the one that springs to mind would be alignment. I understand why the alignment system was simplified, but I liked playing lawful evil characters!

MM: Okay, time to put you on the spot – are there any changes to D&D that you wish hadn't been made, and you think don't work so well within the overall system, and if so what are they and why, in your personal opinion, don't they work? On a similar note, what do you think the greatest changes to the game have been, and why do they work so well?

Mike: The biggest change to D&D in 4e was the shift in how characters advance. It used to be that each class had its own progression of advancement in level. A wizard might gain a new spell, a fighter gains better fighting ability, while a druid can shape-change into an animal. 4e changed all that, giving each class the same pace of advancement. Obviously, the classes all gain different types of abilities, but those abilities all look much more alike. The benefit is that it's easier for new players to learn how all the classes work. The drawback is that classes that used to offer more complexity are simpler, while simpler ones are more complex. There was some value to letting a player choose how complex he wants his character to be. On the other hand, it meant that anyone who wanted to play a wizard had to learn far more rules than the other players.

MM: Slowly winding things up....I don't suppose that you can tell us what you're working on at the moment can you? What can we look forward to, and what's new in the world of D&D...?

Mike: This fall we're rolling out the D&D Essentials, a set of books and boxed sets that are designed to serve as the ideal starting place for D&D. The Red Box introductory starter set is one of the first Essentials releases. It's the perfect way to start playing D&D. After that, we're rolling out player books with new options for the most popular classes in the game. Those books are a good place for new players to go after the Red Box. The content is also a new take on classic character classes, so even D&D veterans should find something interesting there.

D&D ENCOUNTERS BY CHARLES RYAN

D&D Encounters is a shop-based organized play programme in which your local game shop holds short, one-encounter sessions each week. The programme is organized in "seasons," with each season lasting around 12 weeks. The full season forms a single lengthy adventure. The idea is for each encounter to be fun and exciting in its own right, but to also have an "I can't wait to see what happens next week" vibe.

D&D Encounters is intended to be pretty friendly to a drop-in-drop-out style of play—if you show up this week with an appropriate character (or without—there are pre-generated characters available), you can play this week's encounter even if you missed last week or won't be available next week. Combined with the shorter format (a single encounter usually takes an hour, maybe an hour and a half), D&D Encounters is really convenient for new players as well as hardcore gamers who want to get in a little more D&D action but can't commit another entire evening each week.

WotC have been dropping easter eggs and little game-changing tidbits via Facebook, Twitter, and the D&D Community, and encouraging gamers to tweet/blog/FB their experiences. The idea here is to create something of a "shared experience" between players around the world. Kind of like how you can talk to old-school gamers and kick around what happened when you played Against the Giants or Tomb of Horrors. If you're on Twitter, search #dndenc for the chatter. Or follow @Wizards_DnD for their tweets.

The first season has been running throughout the Spring of this year. Season 2 starts in June and is set in the Dark Sun setting, which is being re-released for 4th edition this Summer.

You can find a shop running D&D Encounters by going to the D&D web site at <http://www.wizards.com/DnD/Default.aspx>. Enter "UK" into the little box on the right, and that will bring up a Google map showing participating UK shops. Or touch base with the UK D&D community at <http://community.wizards.com/dnduk>.



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

BOOK REVIEWS

ABC Warriors, the Volgan War Volume 2 – Pat Mills (Rebellion)

This is not the first time I've been exposed to the ABC Warriors (Atomic, Bacterial, Chemical) and hopefully it won't be the last either. The strange, unusual and exciting mix of characters creates a story like no other and in this volume the lines between good guys and bad guys has become very blurry. It's a little confusing at first but soon enough you've caught up to the action and can merely enjoy the chaos and carnage that ensues. Truly this is a story worth following from beginning sequence to the grand finale! **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Blood Angels: Black Tide – James Swallow (Black Library)

Warhammer 40,000 has released yet another spectacular blood-soaked tome to add to its already impressive collection of novels based on the hit game. As per usual there are too many details to go into so I'll be very brief and stingy with my recap.

The Blood Angels are an elite force attempting to catch, and most likely kill, Fabius Bile, a traitor and murderer. They follow him to Dynikas V where he shields himself behind a wall of nearly unstoppable aliens and his own human/animal hybrids. Bile has eluded all other attempts at his capture so far but will the Blood Angels be able to catch him this time. Yes...and no. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Call to Arms – Mitchel Scanlon (Black Library)

The Scarletts are an honorable and decorated unit of Hochland's best swordsmen. Dieter Lanz wants nothing more than to join them in their quest to rid the world of evil. He just doesn't mean to sign up just as they're being thrust into one of the biggest battles of their entire existence. This youngblood enlists into the army only to be thrown into a fight that may be his first and last. Here there be goblins. And orcs. And one bloodthirsty troll called Ironfang. These battles are legendary, the warriors fearless and the gore is piling up. Will Hochland best its toughest foe ever? Will Dieter Lanz and his friends survive the dawn? Maybe. You'll have to read the book to be sure. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Captain America: Reborn – Ed Brubaker & Bryan Hitch – Graphic Novel (Marvel / Panini)

Life, as someone a lot wiser than yours truly once said, is made up of moments, some big and some small, some you remember and some you forget, and folks, moments don't come much bigger or more memorable than when Ed Brubaker decided it was time for Steve Rogers to die. The dude killed Captain freaking America, had him gunned down just before he could testify about the Civil War that tore the Marvel Universe apart. As if that wasn't bad enough, the killer turned out to be Sharon Carter, Cap's girlfriend, who was being controlled by the Red Skull. This was huge. After decades of battle, back and forth, too and fro, the villain finally won. The bad guy. This was another Kennedy moment, I'd always remember where I was and what I was doing when Captain America died, the superhero whose adventures I'd been following on and off since I was a kid, and has been compulsively reading since Brubaker took over writing duties. When Cap died, it was like finding out that the Easter Bunny and Father Christmas didn't exist all over again. However, this being comics, no-one stays dead forever, and just when I started getting used to Bucky being the new Cap (hey, just because the main character dies, doesn't mean the book has to end or that I have to stop reading it), it turns out that Steve Rogers, the original Captain America wasn't dead after all. The bullets that supposedly killed him were actually designed to suspend him in time, to prepare him for another nefarious Skull scheme, but no-one realised or knew, and it's at this point that 'Reborn' starts, the point of realisation, when someone (Sharon Carter) finally puts the pieces back together, recruits his nearest and dearest and sets out to restore Captain America. It's not quite that simple though, as due to Sharon's previous actions in the ongoing book, Cap is now adrift in time, reliving the crucial moments in his life over and over again – which gives Brubaker a wonderful opportunity to slip in and out of Cap's life, balancing the heartache and the battles that he's destined to relive time and time again with the desperate mission to save him. It's a belter of a mini-series, Brubaker is on fine form, crafting a masterpiece that in the hands of other writers could so easily have ended up being a cheese soaked disaster, and with the pencils and art being supplied courtesy of

Bryan Hitch, 'Reborn' becomes a thing of wonder, story and art working in perfect unison. I never thought a comic book could make me so damn happy, it's like Christmas coming early followed by a month of three days weekends. Captain America's back, he's really back, he's really, really back... **Tim Mass Movement**

Captain Britain: The Siege Of Camelot (Volume 4) – Steve Parkhouse, Paul Neary, Alan Moore, John Stokes, David Thorpe, Alan Davis – Graphic Novel (Marvel / Panini)

I suppose it all boils down to what you expect, and want, from your heroes, and your definition of the term 'Superhero'. Do you want the big, all encompassing, world busting, universe saving super-antics of men and women shaped by huge cosmic events, created and made famous by our American cousins, or do you want a more subtle, home spun hero, a man granted his power by the magic of Merlin and moulded by the folklore and tales of old Albion? Do you want Captain America or do you want Captain Britain? Well, to be honest, I'll take both, and you've got any sense, you'll do exactly the same as me, which brings me to 'The Siege Of Camelot', and the fourth volume of the collected adventures of Captain Britain, and the defining crossroads in the characters development. 'The Siege Of Camelot' starts with the Steve Parkhouse epic of the same name, which finds Brian Braddock, (a man every bit as English and Steve Rogers is American) otherwise known as Captain Britain, on a quest with the Black Knight to find the final resting place of Arthur, so that together they may defend Camelot, and the reaches of Otherworld, from Necromon, a demon prince intent on bringing his darkness to the realm. The artwork is sublime, the story brilliant, incorporating as many elements of legend and folklore as humanly possible, and provided he inspiration for Paul Cornell's incredible vision, and resurrection, of the character nearly thirty years later. A quintessentially British story featuring a quintessentially British hero – in other words, a proper Captain Britain story. However, that's only half the story, and half the book, as with the of Parkhouses' run, came the reinvention of Captain Britain, and try as might, Dave Thorpe's intervening reinvention feels a little forced, almost as if he, while trying to reinforce and reinvent the characters identity as a British hero, was trying too hard to emphasise the eccentricity of a British superhero, and as such threw him into a situation, which while based around an intriguing premise, falls a little short in both the writing and artwork departments. As for Jackdaw, well, even Thorpe objected to Braddock's comedy sidekick, a character almost as irritating as Jar Jar Binks. Thank all that's strange, wonderful and bizarre in Comic Ville then for Alan Moore, who upon taking over from Dave Thorpe, promptly killed Jackdaw. Oh, and he killed Captain Britain as well. Then took the raw, basic blueprints that Thorpe had been working from, and rebuilt them, crafting a story that's equal parts Terminator (but before Arnholt and Cameron made the film, or thought of the story...Moore should have sued), Dark Star, The Freak Brothers, James Bond and Superhero classic, taking in alternate worlds, alternate versions of Captain Britain, alien mercenary squads, and much, much more. It's Alan Moore by numbers, completely mad and completely brilliant, my only complaint being that this volume finishes sort of two thirds of the way through Moore's run, the final third of which, was and is the best bit – and Moore's run is available as trade in itself. Still, the fact that the last third or so (actually, it's more like half if me memory serves me correctly) isn't featured I guess that means that there'll be a fifth volume, so if I were you, I'd wait for that. Until then, grab hold of this magnificent Parkhouse Moore sandwich, bite deep and try to ignore the slightly bland Thorpe filling (which doesn't last long and doesn't leave an aftertaste), its tasty treat and the perfect accompaniment to a lazy afternoon and a mug or two of tea. Toodle pip... **Tim Mass Movement**

Cosmopath – Eric Brown (Solaris Books)

Jeff Vaughan is a telepath. He sells his services to catch criminals. When he is approached by billionaire Rabindranath Chandrasakar he is divided. Reading the mind of a dead spacer will be traumatic beyond his ability to cope. But Mr. Chandrasakar will pay for top treatment for Jeff's daughter's cancer. He agrees and the journey begins. Full of spectacular space-scapes and interesting, full-bodied characters, Cosmopath is an amazing contribution to the science fiction genre. Eric Brown is a writer of staggering talents and, should

he continue to write such marvelous books, will most likely end up with a best seller on his hands. I just hope he shares the groupies. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Death & Dishonour – edited by Alex Davis, Nick Kyme, Lindsey Priestley (Black Library)

At this point I've read a pile of Warhammer novels. I've enjoyed them all! The authors always manage to balance heart-stopping action with fast, deep plots and rich characters. Now, for the first time in my experience, they've captured the same excitement in a short story collection. In this book we have nine tales by nine different writers and they're all awesome. Each story is an homage to bravery and cunning. Good guys and bad guys share strengths and weaknesses giving them the feeling of reality, even when facing an unreal foe. The monsters are scary, gross even and always put up a great fight before inevitably falling before a superior foe. Each story is richly written with the intent to keep you reading far into the night. I salute the entire stable of Warhammer writers. Thou art truly amazing. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Evil Ways – Justin Gustainis (Solaris Books)

The Devil is coming. No, seriously. He'll be here soon. If that happens, of course we're all fucked. With some help and a little (a lot of) magic, Quincey Morris and Libby Chastain can prevent the ultimate evil from entering our world and giving us a thousand years of darkness and pain. Life is always full of little nasty surprises, isn't it? This novel is one of a series but it stands on its own merit. I have never read other books in this series but had no problem thoroughly enjoying this one. There are plenty of twists and turns and there's a whole ton of action (and some sex too) so this is a good book for any thrill seekers out there. Just be ready to have a Hell of a good time! **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

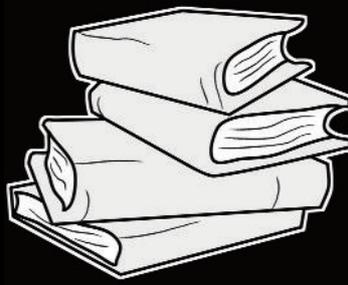
FVZA – David Hine and Wayne Nichols (Radical)

In the concluding comic in the FVZA mini-series the plot thickens and brother and sister Vidal and Landra who we are introduced to in the first comic are leading a squad of troops to secure areas where the infected are thriving (in the sewers), and as we see, the two characters have developed into fully fledged badassess. In the first comic we were also introduced to the origins of the Federal Vampire And Zombie Agency (the second in the series I sadly missed) and now in the third there is far more human interest, not only is there a tainted romance but, more central to the plot, Landra comes face to face with her grandmother, a grotesque Vampire (though it is often hard to tell the difference between zombies and vampires) who is the ruler of all evil. It transpires that their grandfather Hugo Pecos set their grandmother free knowing she was infected and is therefore largely responsible for the outbreak - he now has blood on his hands, and a pissed off missus! As with the previous comic the graphics are superb, particularly the full page images magnifying action or usually one key character (and frequently depicting the zombies and vampires in all their gruesome glory). Ok so at times it verges on Buffy The Vampire Slayer in comic form with the style of action and attempts to tug on the heart strings but this is no bad thing. This is another one of Radical's recent successes (and another comic that would lend itself to the big screen if they so desired). All credit to the graphic artists Ron Allan Martinez and Wayne Nichols for their renderings, which remain consistent throughout the mini-series, and David Hine, who is still at the top of his game. **Lauren Barley**

Horns – Joe Hill (PS Publishing)

Ignatius Parrish is a tragic character in a huge tale of lies, murder and loss. He doesn't handle things well because his life sucks too much to cope. He has a great family, or so he believes, and friends he can trust...or not. When he wakes up one day having sprouted a pair of horns overnight he learns more than he ever wanted to know about his supposed loved ones. Ig's horns bestow powers upon him. Whoever he's near makes startling, unsettling confessions about whatever's on their mind. He also has a certain amount of influence over their actions. This gift of somewhat psychic abilities helps him track down his girlfriend's murderer, a title he has struggled hard to shrug off.

Horns is one of the best books I've ever read, and that's saying a lot. Even now, weeks after finishing the last paragraph I'm gripped by the sense of loss and melancholy this story evokes. The ending is as wonderful as it is strange and hit me like a slap upside the head with a blue whale. Joe Hill doesn't wish to live under the shadow of his famous father (Joe's real last name is King) and I assure you he has no concern there. Mr. Hill is casting a big enough shadow of his own. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**



Introducing ... Buddha (A Graphic Guide) – Jane Hope & Borin Van Loon (Icon Books)

You want to know how the world works, but are addicted to the pace at which information presents itself nowadays? This series of books, under the banner of 'Introducing' is just what you need. An entertaining crash course in all your favourite subjects. This particular book, describes the life and teachings of Buddha. It's not about the cold facts and numbers, but instead takes you by the hand and leads you through the rules of Taosim, Zen and meditation and they're historical influence on Asia, and more recently the Western world. Above all, the writers made sure they kept

it simple and easy to understand without being childish, and the illustrations fit the general atmosphere of the book very well. It's all very much to the point and thoroughly recommended. **Martijn Welzen**

Introducing ... Chaos (A Graphic Guide) – Ziauddin Sardar & Iwona Abrams (Icon Books)

We all know the first thing that comes to mind when attempting to explain Chaos theory. 'If a butterfly flaps its wings in country X, does it cause a storm in country Y?' Can we predict what the outcome will be in the near or distant future of any of our, or nature's, actions? Modern maths and physics have attempted to come up with one theory to rule them all, as Tolkien would have put it. Again this book is so amazing. It's simple enough for us mortals, to understand, but also has the depth it needs to give a much better insight into the subject matter. A perfect introduction from where you can start to explore other material and literature surrounding and about Chaos Theory... **Martijn Welzen**

Introducing Foucault: A Graphic Guide - Chris Horrocks & Zoran Jevtic

Introducing Statistics: A Graphic Guide - Eileen Magnello & Borin Van Loon

Philosophy: A Graphic Guide - Dave Robinson & Judy Groves **Published by Icon Books (£6.99 each)**

Acting as primers to their individual subjects, these pocket sized graphic guides intersperse technical terminology with distinctive (often humorous) graphics and everyday language (occasionally slang) to provide the reader with a detailed but accessible insight into three topics which are often as clear as mud. Pitched somewhere between curious layman and serious student, the guides provide historical background (Biography in the case of Foucault) to their subjects, in addition to the major theories, thinkers and debates which comprise the topic. All three contain useful Further Reading sections, although a Glossary of the terms used throughout the books would have been a nice touch. Occasionally the text is a little too Spartan and fails to neatly link one topic with another, in what appears to be an attempt to seem unconventional; reminding me a tad of those annoyingly pretentious students you find sitting behind you on the bus/train loudly discussing Derrida's theories of literary Deconstruction. At £6.99 these pocket guides may seem rather costly but it's a reasonable price when compared to the double figure £s standard text books on these topics would cost. **Ian Pickens**

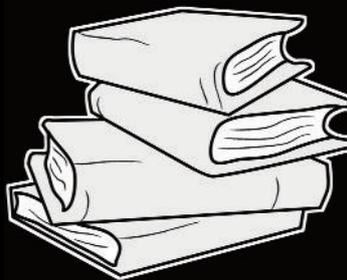
Introducing ... Hinduism (A Graphic Guide) – Vinay Lal & Borin Van Loon (Icon Books)

A graphic guide introducing us to the oldest of the world's major religions. There's so much to be said about the philosophy behind this, it's amazing this little book is as tiny as it is, and yet still serves as a comprehensive guide. As with all other 'Introducing...' books it's just the tip of the iceberg, from where you can dive deeper into the deep blue see if any of the ideas in this book interest you at all. And why shouldn't it? Some of the ideas have touched base with Western religions / ideologies more than once. Besides it's almost shocking to read Hinduism is not always as friendly as the originally made it out to be. Lal got directly to the core of Hinduism while Van Loon provided the illustrations, which makes it easier to understand. Another keeper. **Martijn Welzen**

Introducing...Nietzsche (A Graphic Guide) – Laurence Gane & Piero (Icon Books)

It's nice that this book about the German philosopher Nietzsche shows what great thinker he was and, at the same time, what a complete weirdo he was. If there's one person that perfectly illustrates how geniality and insanity are closely related, Nietzsche would be it. The drawing on the cover for example, where the main character of the book is filled with love thinking about his horse, says it all. Nietzsche is also seen as one of the thinkers whose ideas were the foundation on which the Nazis built their ideology. What's new to

me is how negative some of Nietzsche's ideas about his own country were. Most striking: "Wherever Germany extends her influence, she ruins culture." I wonder how that will work out now that Germany is going to be Greece's biggest benefactor in overcoming the economic crisis? Piero's illustrations fit the sometimes gloomy personality very well, helping to create another great book that serves as an introduction to a person who had an, almost profound, impact upon the world. **Martijn Welzen**



Introduction To Psychology – Nigel C Benson (Iron Books Ltd)

This book is pitched as a graphic guide to your mind and behaviour, Nigel C. Benson has not just created an introduction to a complex and broad subject with the aid of images to provide respite to the facts, but the images are actually a very clever tool to help one visualize the points of the topic, ultimately helping me to retain information. Benson's book fundamentally shows how interesting the human brain is, tracing psychology from Wilhelm Windt's 'Experimental Psychology and Introspection' (examining one's mental state) to Kant's 'Transcendentalism' (explanations outside particular experience – knowing, feeling and willing) through to functionalists like William James and the theory of streams of consciousness. More than that, the book also discusses developmental psychology, which includes actual studies with children and animals and relates it all to the prominence and notability of psychology and what you can do with the knowledge gained in this particular subject. Don't get me wrong, you won't graduate with a first class honours in the subject on this book alone but it is a very thorough introduction no less. Instead of covering a lot of ground, it leaves a lot open to questioning, and rather than try to be conclusive it introduces ideas which are there to be challenged. For someone wanting a basic knowledge of the subject or statistics, philosophy and other such subjects of interest, these deceptively small yet dense collections make for interesting explorations. A unique selling point would be their use in schools and colleges to renew interest in concepts that are gradually becoming less and less popular and make them digestible for people of all levels of education. **Lauren Barley**

Iron Man VS. Whiplash – Brannon Braga, Marc Guggenheim, Phillippe Briones, Andrea Mutti – Graphic Novel (Marvel / Panini)

It was inevitable with the world about to go 'Iron Man 2' crazy (myself included) that Marvel would release a book that somehow tied into the film, and last November, the first issue of 'Iron Man vs. Whiplash' (a four issue mini-series) hit the shelves. Fast forward five months, and with the film about to go on general release, the graphic novel that collects all four issues in a single tome, is here. You know what? It's not too bad, not too bad at all. In fact, it's a lot better than I expected it to be. Okay, so I'm a sucker for "Old Shellhead" I'll admit it and will suffer most indignities to read a semi-reasonable story featuring Tony Stark, but I won't, I repeat won't, suffer a book that makes the character look ridiculous in any way, changes his back story or tires to change him on a fundamental level, I was sort of cautious about 'Iron Man Vs Whiplash'. After all, books linked to films usually suck the big, fat, hairy one and then some, so I wasn't exactly expecting this one to set the world on fire. Guess what? It doesn't, so we're all flame free, but as I've already said, it's a lot better than I expected it to be and actually, it's pretty good. It's a punchy little (Hey, it's a four issue mini-series, 'War And Peace' isn't exactly going to be challenged on a size basis), that sees Iron Man framed for massacring a village in a break-away Russian Republic, and introduces Anton 'Whiplash' Vanko, the sole survivor of the village and crazed inventor hell-bent on revenge and spilling the blood of the "murderer" Tony Stark. Tried in the Hague and thrown in jail and with a homicidal Russian lunatic dogging his every move, Tony 'Iron Man' Stark has to find out who framed him and why and make sure that the real bad guys are brought to justice. So, yeah, a nice punchy little arc that's well written and paced perfectly, served up with some beautiful artwork courtesy of Briones and Mutti and their always reliable pencils and colourist Matt Milla. Yeah, it's not world changing, but it might just recruit a few more readers to the cause, and will entertain the faithful and that's all you can ask of any book. Not bad, not bad at all... **Tim Mass Movement**

Judge Dredd: The Complete Case Files 15 – John Wagner, Alan Grant, Garth Ennis, Ron Smith, Steve Dillon, Carlos Ezquerro, Steve Yeoville, Cam Kennedy, John Hicklenton, Will Simpson (2000 AD / Rebellion)

If you love comics, then you love Judge Joe Dredd. It really is that simple. Most of the people I know, who like me, are avid, committed comic

book readers, grew up reading 2000 AD and, and that initial exposure to the medium developed into a life-long love affair, and Dredd, Tharg's most famous son, walks hand in hand with 2000 AD. Love the comic, love the character. After all, if we didn't, he wouldn't have been around for nearly thirty five years would he? On the surface, Dredd appears to be a relatively straight forward creature, the epitome of fascist law enforcement, serving a dictatorial future city state, dispensing justice to the guilty without mercy, the only thing that matters is his rigid adherence to the letter of the law. Problem with that is, if you only look at the surface, you miss all the frenzied action

taking place just under it. Dredd, like the world in which he serves is complicated, dark and violent, yet at the same time, he's so much more than a product of his environment, a man torn between the system that created him and his desire through is service to make the word a better place for the citizens he swore to protect. In 'The Complete Case Files 15', Mega City One and her inhabitants are slowly beginning to rebuild their lives and homes after the events of 'Necropolis' (if you haven't read it, why not? You should. Chop, chop, you know what to do...), and Dredd is starting to readjust to life in the Big Meg after returning from 'The Long Walk' (as featured in 'The Dead Man', and just like 'Necropolis', if you haven't, why haven't you and you should...) and events of the preceding and already mentioned story-line. Featuring the return of Judge Silver, PJ Maybe (in separate tales), a serial killer who isn't exactly what she appears to be and Dredd's trip to the Emerald Isle amongst other stories, this is Dredd as the character was meant to be written and drawn. Brutal and darkly humorous, yet never drifting far from the bleak truth and horror of how de-humanising the future could, and probably will, be. Comics, and the way in which they tell stories and build their characters, rarely get better than Dredd, and 'The Complete Case Files 15' is Dredd at his finest, stripped down to his base elements, doing what he does best. Like I said, it really is that simple... **Tim Mass Movement**

Last Days Of American Crime – Rick Remender and Greg Tocchini (Radical)

Imagine if the government in the United States (and other countries with high crime rates for that matter) abolished paper money, there would certainly be uproar, civil unrest and absolute carnage and what would it mean for old school criminals, how would they deal with the last days of American crime as we know it? This very notion is presented by Rick Remender in his abrasive noir heist, another one of Radical's finest comics of recent times.

Following the teaser comic sent out a few months back, we now track the trio of emerging protagonists more closely and learn more of their characters as they enter into one last major crime spree. There is the lead protagonist Graham Brick, a hard-boiled knucklehead and a real built-like-a-brick-shithouse badass, Shelby Dupree the sexy token female and her male partner in crime Kevin Cash, who is a highly dangerous and dark individual indeed. All the characters are rendered fantastically, in fact much can be said about the graphics more generally, they are bold, very animated and show action from many different perspectives and angles, capturing a grizzly reality of American life.

As well as defining the characteristics of these people, the comic also shapes the political context in which the comic is set but unfortunately does not elaborate on that as much as it could, that said the plot is very well paced and the dialogue smooth throughout. The combination of strong images and a convincing plot make this one very enjoyable read indeed and as for the cliffhanger at the end...well that has certainly got me eagerly anticipating the next installment. **Lauren Barley**

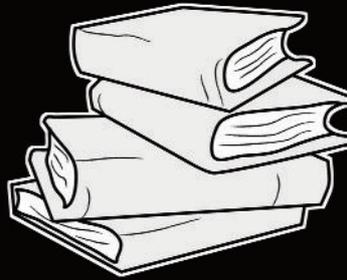
Long After Midnight and Machineries of Joy – Ray Bradbury (PS Publishing)

I have never reviewed two books in the same paragraph before but I found it impossible to find the words to describe these two short stories separately. Ray Bradbury is the famous author of Fahrenheit 451, The Martian Chronicles and Something Wicked This Way Comes among others. As high school students we are introduced to his work and forced to write book reports and chapter summaries on these and other titles. What I never learned during those four torturous years is that he's also a prolific short story writer...and these two collections prove it! No two stories are alike and all of them are surprising in one way or another. You can tell they're all written by a single author but that's to be expected and doesn't take away from the hours of great reading enclosed within these pages. Of course, the always wonderful PS Publishing can be thanked for the joy and rapture we have received from

Long After Midnight and Machineries of Joy! **Jim Dodge Jr.**

Marv Gadgie – Now Then Gadgie (CornDog Publishing)

Highly amusing collection of anecdotes and autobiographical accounts from self confessed football loving punk and creator of ‘Gadgie’ zine. Chronicling Marv’s formative years in the 80s, touching on all the usual cultural references from that decade (Grange Hill, ZX Spectrums, The ‘punk’ episode of Quincy, The Young Ones, Fred Perry shirts and V neck jumpers and <gulp> curly perms), through his forays into Europe, dislike of AC/DC, experiencing the worst toilet in the world (next to the harbour in Boston, Lines in case you are wondering) and of course numerous tales of Footie matches and culture; I found Gadgie’s barbed comments regarding glory chasing premiership fans who support teams totally unconnected with their hometown particularly entertaining and just. If this sounds like an enjoyable read to you then seek professional help. But seriously folks this is an enjoyable stroll down memory lane for anyone over the age of 30 and an entertaining glimpse into the life of Gadgie. **Jim Dodge Jr.**



Nikolai Dante, Amerika – Robbie Morrison (Rebellion)

Nikolai Dante is a rogue, a cheat and a ladies’ man. His successes (and failures) have become part of the folklore of his time and he’s loved by the masses, though the leaders mostly want him dead. In this collection he’s a little older, a little wiser but still manages to get himself into life threatening situations on nearly every page. Amerika is brilliantly drawn and colored by artists John Burns, Simon Fraser and Paul Marshall. I love everything about this series and can’t gush enough to really do it justice but it’s damn good fun and sinfully delightful. **Jim Dodge Jr.**

One For the Road – Stephen King (PS Publishing)

How on earth could I have expected a classic Stephen King tale from one of my Mass Movement books? Am I unhappy about it? No way dude! This short story from one of the world’s most cherished authors takes us back to the days of ‘Salem’s Lot where vampires were still scary and none of them had human girlfriends. We’re reminded that we, mortals that is, are merely cattle for the undead. I usually summarize what I’ve read but this is a short story and I’ve told you as much as I feel is right for a review so now you’ll just have to read it for yourself! **Jim Dodge Jr.**

Roadside Bodhisattva – Paul Di Filippo (PS Publishing)

Kid A is a runaway. His parents are whacked out on Buddhism to the point that they no longer take care of him. Out of frustration he packs a bag and sets out on the road. Accompanied only by his two favorite books he walks alone. That is, until he meets Sid underneath a tree one night. Sid has spent his life on the road and takes Kid A under his wing. Together they travel all the way to glamorous (not!) Deer Park where they set up temporary lives. But when Kid A gets itchy to see more of the world things start to unravel. And boy does it get ugly. This was a fun book to read though it was more of a downer than I usually enjoy. Kid A is the typical know-it-all sixteen year old who blunders through life heedless of the consequences. Sid is a wise middle aged man with a font of philosophical ideas but imperfect follow through. The other characters are real people and wonderfully developed, especially considering how short the book is. This was a good book and I completely recommend it! **Jim Dodge Jr.**

Rogue Trooper Tales of Nu Earth Volume 1 – Gerry Finley-Day, Alan Moore (Rebellion)

I usually try to say something nice about anything I review but I’m feeling decidedly uninspired by this particular offering. The art (brought to us by Dave Gibbons, Cam Kennedy, Brett Ewins, Colin Wilson, Mike Dorey & Eric Bradbury) was interesting even considering it’s black and white but the story and characters failed to grab my attention. There was too much...or maybe too little...of the right kind of cheese to make this one fun to read. As it was I felt like I was trying to read a toddler’s board book. Hopefully I haven’t insulted too many of the fans but this one was just not for me. **Jim Dodge Jr.**

Sinister Dexter - Money Shots (2000 AD)

I’ll be honest, I was all ready to hate this graphic novel when I saw the cover. I don’t read a lot of comics these days because a lot of the more mainstream or bigger company stuff does not appeal to me, so I stick to a lot of DIY stuff that I really enjoy much more. I was completely wrong, I have never read

Sinister Dexter before and wish I had. I am familiar enough with 2000 ADs stuff to be optimistic and I was blown away. After the initial hump of getting to know the two main characters, I was hooked. Sinister Dexter follows the exploits of two Gun-Sharks, Sinister and Dexter who live in a dark, grim post-apocalyptic UK/Europe. Composed of 14 compiled strips, each telling a different short story about the Gun-Shark duo and all superbly illustrated by 7 different artists. Strips range from investigating a shark like monster that’s eating people to Dexter’s origin story which is told through a visit to a shrink, to fighting an alien invasion and eliminating a job on the set of a porn shoot. I loved all the stories but enjoyed Dexter’s origin story the most and how he became a Gun-Shark and how he met Sinister. Masterful storytelling and incredible art (ranging from gritty to almost super hero-esque) make this one you must pick up and try if you haven’t already. I can’t wait to read more. **Jethrobot**

Sir Edward Grey – Witchfinder – In the Service of Angels - Graphic Novel (Published by Dark Horse) Story – Mike Mignola, Art – Ben Stenbeck, Colours – Dave Stewart, Letters – Clem Robbins

More lost cities in the Desert, Egyptian Ra worship cults and mysterious life sucking beasts roaming the streets of Victorian London, Lands within the Earth, ancient curses and brutal death upon their discoverers – sounds familiar? But this time it’s a tale of the supernatural from Hellboy creator Mike Mignola so quality is almost a prerequisite. Artist Stenbeck perfectly captures the grim urban squalor of Victorian London, and there’s more than a hint of Conan Doyle to the story, with an inkling of Poe (Murders in the Rue Morgue anyone?), a sprinkling of Lovecraft, a dash of H.G Wells and of course a pinch of Bram Stoker’s Dracula. Pacey and exciting, the phrase ‘page turner’ definitely applies to this graphic novel. That said the ending seems to come all too soon and feels a little rushed, although it’s left open ended to allow for the possibility of further encounters between Grey and his protagonists. The novel also features a commentary on the origins of the story from Mignola, two short stories referred to in the main body of work (the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria by the Witches of Farnham, thwarted by Edward Grey and the reason for his title and official services to the crown, and the Burial of Katherine Baker – both previously published in other Dark Horse comics) and a selection of Stenbeck’s original character sketches. Despite the slightly disappointing end this is a thoroughly enjoyable read and well worth checking out. **Ian Pickens**

Slaine: Demon Killer – Pat Mills, Glenn Fabry, Greg Staples & Dermot Power – Graphic Novel (2000 AD / Rebellion)

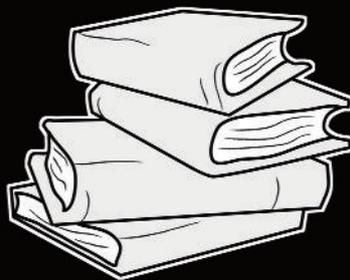
It’s all too easy to dismiss Slaine as a second rate Conan meets Lord Of The Rings rip-off, but anyone who does so, is clearly a schmuck and clearly hasn’t read and knows nothing about either the source material he or she is using as a yardstick or Slaine. Believe me, I know. I’ve had the argument. More than once. Okay, so maybe Pat Mills was inspired by seeing Marvel’s Conan appear, proving that fantasy could work in comics, and maybe somewhere in the back of his mind, he remembered reading Lord Of The Rings once, but that’s about it. Slaine, is based on Celtic mythology, he’s the son of the warped spasm, initially banished from his tribe, wandering ancient Britain conquering all manner of demons, creatures, Gods and villains, slaying the monstrous, mystical and real, before finally returning to his people, uniting the tribes of Ireland, serving as the countries first High King, and then being ritually sacrificed after seven years. A precursor to our modern political system, only a lot more deadly. It’s here, at the moment of Slaine’s death that ‘Demon Killer’ starts, as the Earth Goddess sends him through time to aid Boudicca in her fight against the Roman Invasion of Britain and his ancient demon nemesis, Elfric. Mixing folklore, mythology and history in a timeless tale of fantasy, full to bursting with incredible, exquisitely detailed artwork, ‘Demon Killer’ proves just why Slaine has become essential reading for comic and fantasy fans alike. It really doesn’t get much better than this kids.... **Tim Mass Movement**

Society Verse – Ross Farrar (Bridge Nine Press)Ross Farrar is the vocalist in hardcore band Ceremony. This book was released as a partner piece to Ceremony’s new record, Rohnert Park. It collects all of Ceremony’s lyrics from the demo right up to Rohnert Park. Farrar explains several songs, though the majority of his lyrics are straight forward enough; ‘Pack your fists full of hate, take a swing at the world’, ‘I hate everyone and every fucking thing – this is my war’ are easy enough to get to grips with. You can see Farrar’s writing progress with every album, and also available here are further poems and stories from the vocalist, as well as some very interesting photog-

raphy. Well worth picking up if you're a fan of the band or a fan of hardcore music in general. **Leigh**

Strontium Dog, Blood Moon – John Wagner (Rebellion)

I liked this graphic novel! The art was splendiddilyfic (Carlos and Hector Ezquerra) and really brought the stories to their potential. The character types and interactions are believable and suck you right into the story. From the first page to the last we are taken on an adventure from a future that will probably never happen but might be fun and exciting if it did. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**



The Chapter's Due - Graham McNeill (Black Library)

I have never been a huge fan of Ultramarines but after reading this engrossing story by Graham McNeill I have changed my stance. The characters drag you in and are written in such a way that you can't wait to get back to their part of the story, of course no story of the Ultramarines would be complete without Chapter Master Marneus Calgar. With a galaxy wide attack on Ultramar by the Archenemy Chaos the chapter is split across several worlds to organize a solid defence. Not only do the Adpetus Astartes have to deal with the forces of Chaos but there are also mercenaries, corsairs and traitors to combat throughout. Uriel Ventris is an outstanding focal point to the book, who has to deal with betrayal, rivalries and redemption while trying to understand a mysterious adversary. All in all a very enjoyable read and has intrigued me enough to delve a little deeper into the history of the Ultramarines and pick up a few more books. **Will Pywell**

The Gemini Factor – Paul Kane (Screaming Dreams)

Dear Mr. Paul Kane,
I just finished reading your book *The Gemini Factor*. Now that I'm done I'm supposed to write a review/ short synopsis of your novel. I find myself feeling a bit inadequate. I'm nearly epiphanous...orgasmic and it's all your fault. No, I didn't touch myself inappropriately with the book. In fact, I read the PDF file on my Sony Reader and it has no vibrate function whatsoever. Instead I was overwhelmed by your skill with the written (typed) word. The characters were so rich and textured, the details so lovingly wrought, that I was caught in a whirlwind of literary joy. I can't possibly express in words the awe I felt upon finishing this extraordinary piece. From the first word on the first page all the way to the last word of the epilogue, you had me glued to the page. You have taken the idea, the fear, of serial killers and twisted it into something even more deranged (yet even more beautiful) than ever before. This thirty five year old father and heavy equipment operator nearly wept when I finished reading *The Gemini Factor*. Now I would like to thank you for the emotional thrill ride your book evoked. Thank you Mr. Kane. You have enriched my life. **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

The Killer – Modus Vivendi - #1 - Comic (Published by Archaira) Written by Matz, Illustrated by Luc Jacamon

Reprising the anonymous Killer from his self imposed sanctuary Matz and Lucman have launched a brand new storyline of this highly stylized and award winning series. The artwork is unique and striking, allowing the story to unfold clearly without the necessity to annotate each frame. The writing itself is Spartan; reduced in the main part to bare facts & comments straight from The Killer's lips; defining his detached persona despite several tacit glimpses into an apparently affluent family life. The story revolves around The Killer's emergence from retirement and the execution of a three specific and apparently unconnected individuals. The murders allow The Killers to ponder on the philosophical nature of the human condition, particularly his feelings towards religion and the drudgery of 'normal' work. When his third victim turns out to be a nun The Killer starts to question the reason behind his employers' request. His investigations uncover a common link; Oil. Then things start to get messy. A wonderful sense of pace and stunning graphics combine with a genuinely well written Thriller storyline to produce a quality comic; well deserving of your attention. **Ian Pickens**

The Lords Of Misrule – John Tomlinson, Steve White, Dan Abnett, Gary Erskine & Peter Snejbjerg (Radical Books)

Almost all literature, whatever it's genre or format, has a distinctive flavour, and *The Lords Of Misrule* is no exception. It's a British book, and could only have emerged from the UK, being based on, in and around the mysteries of English legend and folklore, both ancient and urban. Presented as a series of interconnected stories, '...Misrule' is, in equal parts, a horror story, a folk

based fantasy, a daring tale of adventure in parts known and unknown and a terrifying one hundred thousand year old mystery whose climax gently opens the door for many a sequel. Cleverly interweaving the fates of each and every character, the book revolves around the eventual head on meeting between humanity and the Sidh (pronounced Shay), the ancient ones, the eponymous Lords Of Misrule. Based in and around the fictional town of Callow, it also examines the links between urban legend (you know that really weird thing that happened to a friend of a friend of a friend), myth and ancient folklore and how they're connected and the parts they play in each of our lives, and how what lies just under the surface of the seem-

ingly obvious may actually be a lot stranger and frightening than any of us dare imagine. It may be close to sixteen years old (reprinted in this edition in its entirety and in beautifully rendered, painted, full colour for the first time), but it's as good as any other book on the market at the moment, and is vastly different (apart from *Strangehaven* maybe, which treads slightly similar ground, yet at the same time is vastly different, and is still one of the best British books of the last, or any other, decade) from just about anything else. If you're looking for something a "little" (Ladies and gentlemen, we have a contender for understatement of the year...) different that'll dig its claws in and hook you from the get go, then you really need to read 'The Lords Of Misrule'. If you do, believe me, things will never be the same again... **Tim Mass Movement**

The Marquis – Inferno (The Collected Danse Macabre and Intermezzo) – Graphic Novel. (Published by Dark Horse), Written and Illustrated by Guy Davis

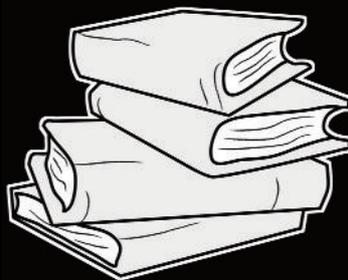
Now I'll admit up front I'm not a great fan of Black and White, in neither graphic novels nor films; don't know why, just always struggled with the format. So this extensive body of work (coming in at a chunky 238 pages) had a battle on its hands to impress me from the off (despite the slight concession to colour in the shades of red, orange and yellow which define the visions of Hell in the mid section of the novel). The plot revolves around the efforts of one Vol de Galle, a former Catholic Inquisitor who attempts to battle the demons which manipulate society, disguised as human beings (is anyone else thinking this might be an analogy to the new government of the UK? No? Just me then). What struck me immediately was the quality of Davis' line drawing which is quite exceptional, albeit disturbing. The philosophical and religious musings of the main character as he struggles with his visions of the evil entities which surround him, and the differing perceptions of 'good' and 'evil', of people in general, and the demons themselves, are quite involved and deeper than your average graphic novel, though Davis cleverly maintains enough action pieces to establish an exciting pace and keep the readers interest. It's a heavy duty read and not for the faint hearted but rewarding nonetheless. **Ian Pickens**

The Secret History – Book 8 (The Seven Pillars of Wisdom) - Comic (Published by Archaira) Written by Jean-Pierre Pecau, Illustrated by Igor Kordey, Colours by Chuck Chuckry

Extremely detailed artwork brings alive this tale of conflict between the four original Archons to control the fate of humankind. This eighth episode centres on the coalition of the four to combat an evil fifth Archon, William of Leece, who aims to initiate the Apocalypse, beginning with his successful attempt to plunge humankind into World War One. The theft of a powerful Runestone by renegade English spy St John Philby from the lost city of Kor (an evil forerunner of Jerusalem) and the efforts of the Archon Reka to recover them, provide the subplot of this instalment of the sprawling 'Secret History' series, which covers the period of 1350 -2004, and incorporates many real life events and characters. As suggested by the title in this tale it's the presence of Lawrence of Arabia as an expedition guide to find the lost city of Kor and track down the missing Philby. It's a pretty high brow concept and although the whole 'Secret History' (incorporating the Russian Revolution, Kennedy Assassination etc.) is nothing new, the supernatural element does bring something refreshing to the table. The English and Jewish protagonists conform to pretty much every stereotype available, but this doesn't detract from an enjoyable 'boys own' romp which runs rather like an adult Biggles with occult leanings. Despite a rather thin text this is worth checking out for the artwork alone which is both sublimely drawn and coloured. **Ian Pickens**

Troublemakers (Hardback) Graphic Novel I guess you could classify this as 'one for the fans,' as an offshoot of the 'Love and Rockets' saga, this short graphic novel is an illustrated film adaptation within a comic of Rosalba 'Fritz'

Martinez's (Love and Rocket's Luba's half sister) film career. Still with me? Good. If you're a big fan of the series I'm sure it'd make a lot of sense, if like me however you've only dabbled in the back catalogue of Gilbert Hernandez this will probably be a bit indecipherable. Illustrated simply with a heavy emphasis on film widescreen panel design it reads very well but slowly loses it's mind and direction having started strong with a simple three character setup. Con-artists conning each other for two hundred thousand dollars with - as fans of Hernandez come to expect - big boobs and double crosses. The story and its conclusion left me a little cold and although the look and feel of it comes across very nicely as a pastiche of indie cinema it leaves you with a slight disappointment of failing to capitalize on it's setup, with story lines left open and a few too many double crosses to make sense with said double crosses mainly told in static talking sections. Overall it probably means more to the hardcore Hernandez fans and although the character studies are quite interesting with great design and art it poses a few too many un-believable scenarios to be taken as a 'film' and a few too little ideas to be taken as a stand alone comic. But the fits are great. **Alex**



it falls into the wrong hands. Which it does, which leads to a number of bone crunching showdowns, until the big bad and the twist in the tail are revealed, both of which are worth the price of admission five times over. Both the story and the artwork (courtesy of Mr Ellis and Mr. Kurth, gentlemen, we applaud you) are incredible, opening up a number of new, original and different ideas - the underground network and Faustus are just begging (as am I...please, please, please) for their own book), that have to be explored and expanded on, but that's another idea for another day, and until then, we'll just have to settle down and re-read 'Ultimate Armour Wars', a duty that I'll gratefully perform time and time again. The evolution and continuous development, as

far as character and stories are concerned, of both Tony Stark and Iron Man are definitely heading in the right direction proving that there's plenty of life left in the character yet, and with the new movie due to hit any day now, there's been a better time to get into the book. And you know what? 'Ultimate Armour Wars' is the perfect introduction.... **Tim Mass Movement**

Twilight of Kerberos: The Call of Kerberos – Jonathon Oliver (Abaddon Books)

Twilight is a world full of monsters and men. Sometimes it's hard to discern which is which. Silus Morlader is about to become even more confused as he responds to the Call of Kerberos. A simple fisherman, Silus is happily married to the beautiful Katya and they're expecting their first child. When humanoid fish-like creatures burst from the sea and destroy their home, things get ugly. Aided by Old Race magic and in danger of being thwarted by Final Faith fanatics, Silus and a cast of other characters make their way past the Storm Wall into the unknown. It's apparent that Abaddon Books editor-in-chief Jonathon Oliver is a fan of dark fiction. This book, his first novel, is a splendid addition to the *Twilight of Kerberos* line of pulp fiction. I wasn't sure what to expect but this story is freakin' amazing! It's eerie, dangerous and most importantly, has a feeling of old gothic horror like the immortal Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft. This is a 5 out of 5 stars! **Jim Dodge Jnr.**

Why Be Something You're Not? Detroit Hardcore 1979 – 1985 (Published by Revelation Records) Written by Tony Rettman, Foreword by Tesco Vee

One of my main gripes with Steven Blush' American Hardcore was the pitiful amount of space given to hardcore bands from the heartlands of the Midwest, particularly the Detroit scene which continued its rich heritage of producing outstanding music in the form of the Necros, Negative Approach and the Meatmen. Rettman's book goes some way to correcting this oversight and provides us with timely reminder of the importance of these bands (and the individuals which comprised them) on the developing American hardcore scene of the early 80s. Like the hardcore blasts produced by the bands themselves, Rettman uses short sharp paragraphs to introduce the subject and then lets the participants do the talking for themselves. By concentrating on the main protagonists in the Detroit scene Rettman provides a first hand insight into the individuals, alliances, petty disputes and scene politics which dominated the Detroit scene between 1979 and its eventual fragmentation in 1985. The book features some fantastic live shots from legendary venue such as the Freezer and Nunzios, band discographies, show listings and flyers from the era. An essential piece of hardcore history and a must have for any discerning fan of hardcore music. **Ian Pickens**

Ultimate Armour Wars – Warren Ellis & Steve Kurth – Graphic Novel (Marvel / Panini)

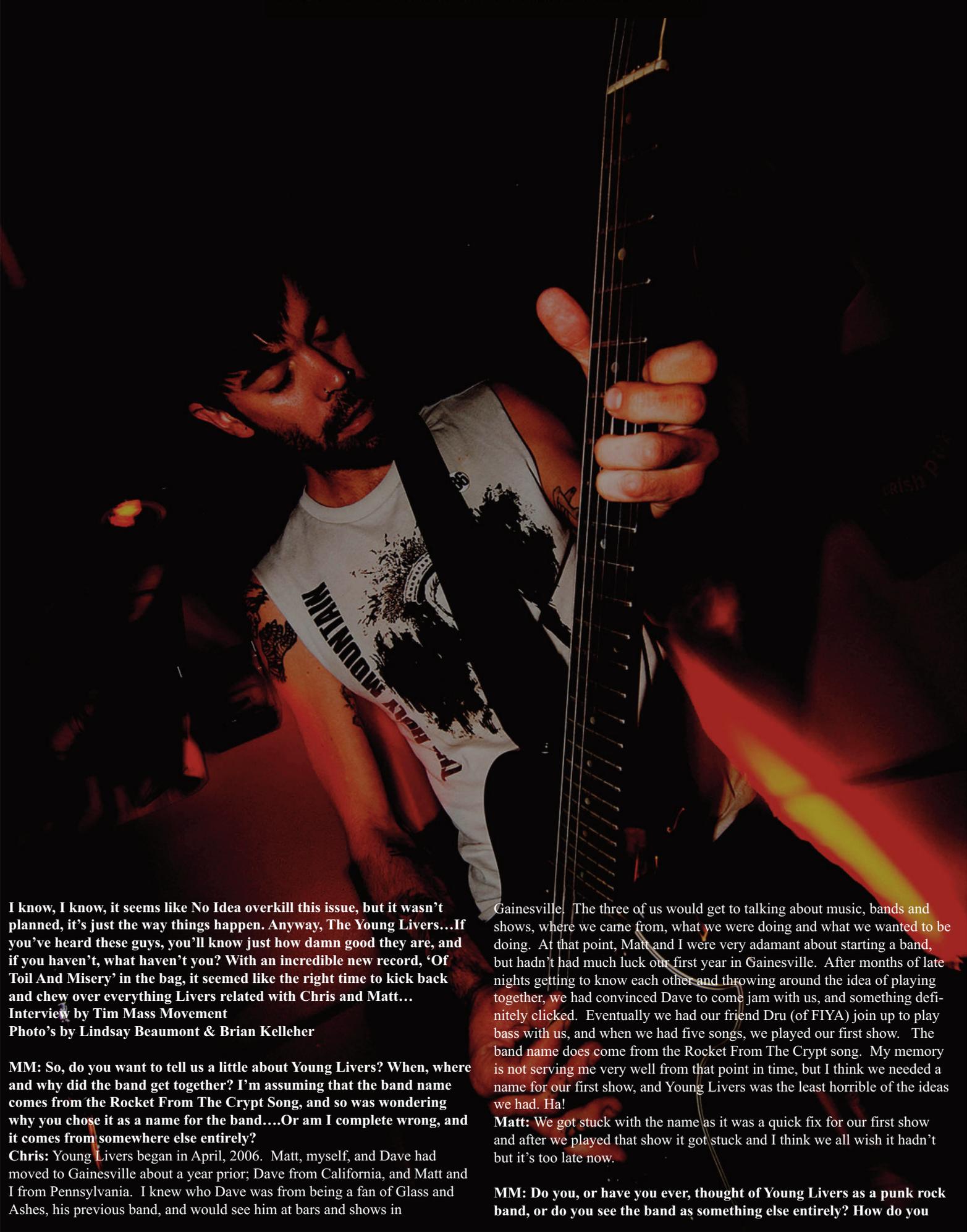
I've got to be honest; I dig the hell out of Marvel's Ultimate Universe. Ever since they gave Mark Millar the keys to the kingdom, and he came up with 'The Ultimates', and then Brian Michael Bendis smashed it all to pieces with Ultimatum, things have gone from good to insanely bloody brilliant, and they just keep getting better and better. Take 'Ultimate Armour Wars' for instance, in which the Ultimate Universe Iron Man, also known as Tony Stark, a hard drinking, live for the moment and to hell with the consequences kind of hero, stumbles across a couple of seemingly opportunistic thieves trying to salvage and steal from the New York headquarters of Stark International, or rather, what's left of it after the events of Ultimatum, setting off a chain of events in which our hero desperately tries to recover what's been stolen from him before

ZombieBomb – DeadNotDead - #1 – Comic (Published by Terminal Press) Edited & Art Directed by Adam Miller & Rich Woodall

Outstanding collection of Zombie comic strips (such as Zombie confessional 'Diary of a Deadman'), short stories, cartoons & photos from a myriad of writers and artists, ranging from fine art to cute 'Emily Strange' style mainstream, and including work by some big hitters such as Shawn McManus (Swamp Thing and Sandman). Both the writing and artwork are of any extremely high quality and Miller & Woodall are to be commended for their efforts to produce such a fine (rotting) body of work. The mix of gore and humour works perfectly making ZombieBomb an enjoyable gorefest which leaves you smiling. Six instalments of Zombie Bomb are planned for release over the next 12 months I can honestly say I can't wait to read the next issue. **Ian Pickens**

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YOUNG LIVERS



I know, I know, it seems like No Idea overkill this issue, but it wasn't planned, it's just the way things happen. Anyway, The Young Livers...If you've heard these guys, you'll know just how damn good they are, and if you haven't, what haven't you? With an incredible new record, 'Of Toil And Misery' in the bag, it seemed like the right time to kick back and chew over everything Livers related with Chris and Matt...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

Photo's by Lindsay Beaumont & Brian Kelleher

MM: So, do you want to tell us a little about Young Livers? When, where and why did the band get together? I'm assuming that the band name comes from the Rocket From The Crypt Song, and so was wondering why you chose it as a name for the band....Or am I complete wrong, and it comes from somewhere else entirely?

Chris: Young Livers began in April, 2006. Matt, myself, and Dave had moved to Gainesville about a year prior; Dave from California, and Matt and I from Pennsylvania. I knew who Dave was from being a fan of Glass and Ashes, his previous band, and would see him at bars and shows in

Gainesville. The three of us would get to talking about music, bands and shows, where we came from, what we were doing and what we wanted to be doing. At that point, Matt and I were very adamant about starting a band, but hadn't had much luck our first year in Gainesville. After months of late nights getting to know each other and throwing around the idea of playing together, we had convinced Dave to come jam with us, and something definitely clicked. Eventually we had our friend Dru (of FIYA) join up to play bass with us, and when we had five songs, we played our first show. The band name does come from the Rocket From The Crypt song. My memory is not serving me very well from that point in time, but I think we needed a name for our first show, and Young Livers was the least horrible of the ideas we had. Ha!

Matt: We got stuck with the name as it was a quick fix for our first show and after we played that show it got stuck and I think we all wish it hadn't but it's too late now.

MM: Do you, or have you ever, thought of Young Livers as a punk rock band, or do you see the band as something else entirely? How do you

feel about bands being placed in genre's, or being part of musical scenes? Is, in your opinion, being identified as being part of a musical genre beneficial or detrimental to bands? Why?

Chris: I think putting a band into a genre or musical scene can be beneficial, but isn't always necessary. It depends on the audience trying to be reached. If there's a kid out there whose favourite genre of music is "spirit of '88 hardcore" or "shoe gaze indie rock", then when they see that description on a website or a record cover, and the band is a cookie-cutter definition of that description, the person will be pleased. The description worked. Other bands though, transcend those labels, and don't always need a cut-and-dry two-word phrase that sums them up. I don't think Young Livers needs that kind of description, but if it happens, that's cool, I've always been hard-pressed to describe our band, and have given up trying. Are we a punk rock band? That one I can't answer either. We've all been punk rockers or hardcore kids or this and that somewhere along the line, but for this band we've made a conscious decision not to wear our personal politics or ideals on our sleeve.

Matt: In addition to what Chris is saying, I would say that we are a punk band but not in the genre sense of the word. It is more that we have a similar idea of how we approach our creative and active ideals of how music should be assembled. I think we all want to go the route that is more in conjuncture with the punk rock ideals. So in that sense I think that we are a punk band. We try and have the people we put records out with, have art created by, book shows with, be people we talk to and try to have or create a relationship with.

MM: Sort of following on from the above, do you think that people have a preconceived notion or idea of what Young Livers sound like, or encompass, when they see that you're a No Idea band? Why? Do you think that label identity, and association, has helped people discover the band and opened doors for you, and if so, how has it aided Young Livers in both?

Chris: It's hard to say if a person can know exactly what to expect from a band, seeing that they're on a certain label. Lots of No Idea bands share the same characteristics, whether it be musical style, approach to recording or touring, length of cut-off shorts, etc. But No Idea also has an ever-evolving roster, so I'd say it's harder now to do that sort of pigeon-holing. In the same breath, though, before I had a record with them, when I would see that a No Idea band was playing, or had a new record out, my interest would be piqued a little more than usual. No Idea's got a great track record. Going further I can definitely say the label association has helped Young Livers, in the way I just described, especially when we go overseas, or to a place we've never been before.

MM: Right, you guys have a new record out, 'Of Toil And Misery'...How, if at all, do you think it differs from (if it does) from your previous recorded output, both in terms of song-writing and how you approached recording it? Where does the album title come from, and does it have any special significance, or relate to the record and its content? Or is it just a title...?

Matt: "Of Misery and Toil" is the record title and I forget where it came from, it is probably something I read or some drunken conglomeration of words spewed in a diatribe of most likely shit. It relates to the record because it all kind of lyrically ties together the two years of frustration in personal situations and social commentary that was written into the lyrical content. As far as the recording and writing process it differs a significant amount from the first record. The material was written with Mike Carter as a permanent member. So we had a fourth member being a strong part of the writing, in-

cluding the addition of Mike singing on a lot of the record. So material wise we took a new direction. The recording process also took a new direction. We spent more time on recording and tried to write something more encompassing as an album which differs from "The New Drop Era" where we were trying to capture the inception of the band and the moment. I think "Of Misery and Toil" was more of a full idea instead of the beginning brainstorm of the band. Also the production of the recording is of a higher fidelity.

MM: How important are lyrics to you guys? Are they as important as the music, of equal importance, or less important? Why? What kind of lyrical themes have you utilised and explored on 'Of Toil And Misery'?

Matt: I think lyrics are very important. Sometimes the lyrics of a band can ruin some great music. I like what I like and I am far from the most intelligent or eloquent person. I do however try my best to write something that to me has some genuine and passionate meaning. I am not sure if it comes off that way or is received the way it is intended. I rack my brain trying to find a

way to express feeling and somehow paint a mindset or emotion through words and sometimes it works and sometimes it fails. I have some things that have been printed that make me cringe; so sorry about that to anyone who reads them, my bad. As far as importance in relation to music writing I think we try and keep it equal. Everyone reads all the lyrics before we record to make sure it agrees with everyone and that things that are printed represent all of us. Lastly lyrical themes are usually as I stated a little before from personal feelings or social commentary about the things that we deal with. There are some more personal lyrics on this record than "The New Drop Era".

MM: Do you think that a band needs to constantly evolve and push itself, or do you think that when a band discovers it's sound, or niche, that place where it's most comfortable, it should work within the confines of it's established sound, genre, musical area? Why? Is musical evolution a necessity, or is there some value, and hidden depth and pleasure in stasis?

Chris: Some bands have been around 20 or 30 years doing the same thing, and that's because that one thing works. Other bands are a little more multi-faceted than that, and do best when they are constantly growing or changing. My personal taste has definitely changed over the years, and I've come to really enjoy bands that

started in one place and evolved into to a whole new animal. It makes me appreciate each record of theirs in a different way, and elicits different emotions when hearing something from a certain time period. It also shows at least someone in the band cared enough to push the envelope, and wasn't afraid to lose a few fans by doing something different. One requirement would have to be the band still retaining that spark that got you excited about them in the first place. So sure, breaking new ground is good, but evolving isn't always a necessity; fuck it, sometimes you need to hear some Ramones, or AC/DC, or Screaming Weasel.

MM: Is being in a working band everything that you thought it would be when you were younger, or is it completely different? If so, how is it different? What, in your opinion, are the best and worst things about being a musician in a touring band?

Chris: It's different. There's a definite sacrifice/reward system in place that I thought I had figured out when I was younger, but things change as you change. My comfort level around certain things is different, and my idea of a good and a bad night is definitely different. Things have remained pretty organic and self-sustaining thus far in Young Livers, so it's come to a point where I've realized I'll get out of it what I put into it, and I'm happy with





that. Best and worst parts? Well, a good thing is touring feeds that part of me that can't sit still, and that isn't happy with staying in one place. On the bad side, relationships and friendships suffer, it's hard to keep a job, things change at home without me being there. But at this point in my life, I don't want the same things 'normal people' want, and it's a good enough trade for being able to do something I'm passionate about.

MM: Have you ever had one of those moments when you just want to jack it all in and go home, settle down and do something...well, something different? If so, when did it hit you, and how did you overcome it? If you weren't in Young Livers, what would you be doing?

Chris: I think my last response covered this a little bit. The longer I've been in a touring band and am throwing certain luxuries away to hit the road, the more I'll ask myself, "is this what I want to be doing?". I've hit some walls, and been out of touch with the band at certain points, but I'll remember we've all invested a part of ourselves in the band, and there's something about it that works. There's always the little things that make it fun, and always the promise of something new or different that makes it rewarding. If I wasn't in Young Livers, I imagine I'd be in another band, or going to school, or following my dream of writing the lost season of Home Improvement.

MM: It seems like you guys are constantly touring or playing, so I was curious about how the new songs were going down live? When you're touring to support a new record, how do you balance the set out between older, more well know songs and the newer material? Does crowd reaction ever play a role in the decisions...?

Chris: The new songs seem to be going well, as far as us having fun playing them, and the crowd reaction. Newer songs will always be a little more fun for me to play, as they're more of a challenge. Old songs always have to be part of our set, too, because we factor in people who haven't heard our later stuff. Nothing's worse than playing all new songs and people not knowing any material. The mood of the room just seems to fall. The songs we play in our set represent the songs we're most comfortable with. Certain songs come out great on the recording, but consistently pulling them off live doesn't work so well. I'd love to be able to play every song from every record without skipping a beat, but we like to focus on having the most solid set with songs that work together best in the live setting. It's definitely disappointing for us when someone yells out a song name, but we can't play it. Every tour we try to throw something new in, to keep it fresh for us and people watching.

MM: What's the strangest, most bizarre, way out thing that's happened to you guys whilst out on tour? Go on, share...

Matt: I like how Chris left this question to me. Curious as I feel like he would have had something real special to offer, you know, a real revealing story that may bare all. That unfortunately is for Chris to tell, not me. The most bizarre story...I cannot tell, I got half way through writing it and realized it shouldn't be in print, when we come over next time let's have a beer and I will tell you that one in person. Maybe second most bizarre story took place on Mike's 30th birthday when we went out to the Clermont an infamous place in Atlanta. As we went in and bought Mike some shots for his big Bday, we noticed a familiar face playing Galaga, Woody Harrelson. This is of course was post show by sometime and we were thoroughly intoxicated. So, we thought it would be cool to try and get a photo with him, you know something to remember Mike's 30th. Mike tried to approach him and was swiftly discarded. Dave tried a second time and offered him a shot, Dave was fairly persistent and Woody wasn't receptive in the least. So Woody left the Claremont and we were disappointed. Chris and I decided to leave shortly after and Mike and Dave remained. Chris and I went across the street to meet some other friends to hang out. When we entered to meet with friends we noticed Woody with an entourage of people hanging out. Knowing that Dave was willing enough to try again I called him and he and Mike came over and met us. Dave then decided to just sit himself down right in the middle of this large group of people, lean over to Woody and say, "Hey man come on lets get weird." Almost immediately the entire group left. We were disappointed but accepted our fate. The next day we left Atlanta and drove home. When we got home we read an article that said that the following day Woody Harrelson had punched some paparazzi in the airport. We would like to think Dave drove Woody nuts.

MM: Moving over to more personal stuff...Everyone seems to have a band or record that completely changed their lives, or rather changed the way that they thought and think about music. So which band, and/or which record changed you, and how and why did it /they change you?

Matt: I would say what really changed me wasn't a record. I would say skate boarding was more of a catalyst for changing the perspective of the world for me. Before skating I had begun to explore music outside the conventional realms and gotten into some bands I still love like Descendants, Drive like Jehu (Yank Crime came free with a Thrasher subscription) etc. As far changing my life completely it was getting into skate boarding that introduced me



ularity it is now. Skateboarding when I was young meant you were the least accepted part of society, at least where I grew up. We were constantly chased by police, jocks and ostracized by most people. This is where I met junkie kids who squatted with Mohawks and militant straightedge kids and all those in between. I can say I never was good at skateboarding and didn't really stick to it but that is how I got into my first band, how I first learned about DIY, Mixtapes, records and an entire world where we accepted. It was truly, truly mind opening.

MM: It's often been noted that music, especially genre's of music, seem to undergo cyclical shifts in popularity, coming and going every ten years or so? Why do you think this happens? Why do genre's and bands fade in and out of the spotlight and have career popularity highs and lows?

Chris: I'd say I'm not entirely equipped to answer this question, as I only keep up with a small amount of music. Seems to me that something new will come along, and be popular on a small level. Then someone notices, and the band or genre will take off for a little while, eventually to be scooped up and exploited for as long as it can make money. After five years or so, though, it's completely passé, everyone forgets about it. Give it a few more

years, or ten more years, and all of a sudden 'Garage Rock', or 'Arena Rock', or 'female-fronted acoustic pop', or whatever you can imagine will become the "next big thing" again. It is very cyclical. That seems to work for popular music, or shit that gets played on top 40 radio, and that's why I'm happy I'm not involved with that aspect of it all. What I appreciate is seeing people be genuine, and while on our level things aren't always one hundred percent original, at least most of the time I know it's not money or MTV or Mountain Dew! or the "next big thing" that's fuelling people's intentions for creating music.

MM: So, what's next for Young Livers? What do you guys have planned? If there's anything that you'd like to add, I guess this is the time for you to do it...

Matt: We will be touring a lot over the next couple years and we have just demoed a new EP which is coming sometime soon not sure when. We also have some 7 inches planned. I think we all want to look back on this time in our band as the more productive portion of its existence. We aren't getting any younger.



BLACKLIST ROYALS



Who doesn't like a bit of Social Distortion, The Replacements, Bruce Springsteen and good old fashioned American rock-n-roll? Imagine then, a band that combines those elements with a punk rock infused folksy-blues based swagger. How good would that band be? Damn right, they'd be excellent. In fact, they'd be a little something like the Blacklist Royals...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

MM: Alright, so lets start where all things do, at the beginning...When, where and why did the band get together, and where does your name come from? Is the band named for or after anything and anyone, and if so why?

BLR: BLR got together in late 2005/early 2006, Rob and I had moved to Nashville the year before to start a new band after our old one broke up and we basically blended together with the band Eric was in at the time, the name was kind of a random combination of taken from this huge list we made while trying to think up a new band name, I really wish I could go back and read the ones that didn't make the cut, I think one was like Six Gun Serenade or some stupid shit, we had some pretty ridiculous ones. If there's a band out there called Six Gun Serenade then uh, ignore that last comment.

MM: I was kind of curious about what influences you, both as musicians and a band, because listening to the new record...I (although I may be wrong, happens all the time) can hear Social Distortion, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, early Springsteen...? How, if at all, would you define the music you make? The closest I can come is a modern American Rock-n-Roll Roots with a healthy dose of Doo-Wop and punk rock

thrown in...How do you see yourselves?

BLR: That was actually a much better description of the band that I probably could've given, I always suck at that. With this album we definitely did try to throw things back a little bit to a lot of our earlier influences, kind of like the Ramones did, but in a different way, and obviously not as good as the Ramones.

MM: Following on from the previous question....You guys just released your second album, "Semper Liberi". How was the whole recording process, and is it true that you jazzed up and decorated the studio whilst working on the record? If so, how did you "transform" it, and why? My Latin is a little rusty (last time I used it was 31 years ago), but as far as I remember, "Semper Liberi" means something like "Always Free", and I wondered who was free? The band, you guys as individuals, or does it apply to a group or groups of people, or humanity as a whole? What, if indeed here's any at all, if the significance of the records name?

BLR: Yeah, we definitely did try to get a trippy vibe going while we were recording, lots of pictures of wolves and Indians, lots of candles and shit. It was really more to be funny than for any other reason, next time around I'm ready to take it a step further and have all of us grow beards and wear tie-dyed pirate-ish puffy shirts, maybe involve some hallucinogens, maybe some sitar. "Semper Lieri" came from the West Virginia state motto "Mountaineers Are Always Free". Rob and I are from WV, and we felt like that just kind of stuck with the whole idea behind the band and the album in general, plus we both had it tattooed on us, it sounded tough, so we just said fuck it that's the album name.

Going back to what I said earlier, I don't think Jamie could grown a beard, so he may have to get some like little round purple Janis Joplin glasses or

something before we head back in the studio.

MM: Being one of these poor schlubs *(yeah, right, seriously, its great gig) who just gets the basic review package, that is the music and nothing else, I was wondering what the songs on the new record were about?

Honestly, I don't even have song titles; just track numbers...Help me out guys....

BLR: That sucks! I'm going to have to get you a full-on version of the album! There's a few love songs on there, a few socio-political ones, a few tour tunes, some just feel-good jams, a cover song, a re-written standard, all kinds of shit really.

MM: All to often, geographical locations can have a HUGE bearing and influence on a band music and sense of identity (for instance, New York Hardcore, LA Punk rock etc.), so do you guys think that both Nashville and indeed, it's and your home state, Tennessee have played any part in the bands development, or influenced you guys, both as musicians and as individuals?

BLR: Well, I wear cowboy boots now, so that's something. Honestly Nashville had a lot of influence on the band, not what's happening there now, but just it's history, Rob and I played there on tour with our old band and decided to relocate and try to get a new band going there for that very reason. It's really sad to be in that town now honestly, it's got such a rich history and unlike other music centers in this country like New Orleans or something the whole Nashville culture is in a process of selling itself out and trying become the new LA. I mean I dig being in LA, but when I'm in Nashville I want it to feel like Nashville, but who knows, it maybe have always been that way, and anything beats living in West Virginia.

MM: You played SXSW this year didn't you? Was it what you thought it would be? We kinda hear all these crazy stories about it, bands playing everywhere, music guys and gals, parties and all sorts of weird stuff...So what was SXSW like for you guys?

BLR: SXSW was not as hectic as I thought it would be, and actually ended up being a much better time than I imagined I'd have. I really don't remember most of my good stories from SXSW for obvious reasons, but I know Friday night Jamie and I ended up in this really swank apartment where there was some hipster band playing, some girl basically having sex with like ten people in the middle of the kitchen, and lots of very emo-swooshy dudes creeping around, so we stole a box of wine, bailed, and went to Pita Pit with Red City Radio's manager Brad and let everyone in the restaurant take swigs off our newly acquired box of wine. A bunch of other stuff probably happened that is a blur to me now, I did see Cokie The Clown though!

MM: Having done the Warped Tour a couple of times, I wondered what you thought about the whole touring festival thing? What, in your opinion, and having been there and done it a couple of times, are the positives and negatives of touring festivals? Do you prefer those bigger shows or touring by yourselves and playing clubs and smaller venues? Why?

BLR: I'd say at this point Warped Tour has moved beyond a "traveling festival" to a category all it's own, granted it's the only traveling festival we've ever played, but I'd imagine most bands that have done Warped, at least small ones doing it in a van, would just say "Warped Tour is Warped Tour". I'm actually in the van and we're driving to Rad Fest right now, if someone could capture the awesomeness of things like The Fest or Harvest Of Hope and make a tour out of that.. now THAT would be amazing. Warped Tour is cool, but it's hard to compete with huge bands when you don't even have a record out, however, I got to see Bad Religion for a week for free last time around, so fuck it, we'd do it again in a second.

MM: I get the impression that you guys tour and play a lot...Is it hard trying to constantly readjust to "normal" and "everyday" life when you get home? What do you miss most about home when you're on the road, and what do you miss most about the road when you're at home? Why?

BLR: I personally miss my dog Bootsie the most when we're gone, other than a few other select people, that's about it. I have no home but the road, I started touring in bands when I was 17, and any hope for a "normal" life after that point was just out the window.

MM: You have to tell us, what's "Weedshine", do you guys really distill it yourselves, and if so, what's the secret to brewing the really good stuff...?

BLR: The whole Weedshine thing started at The Fest Seven when some old friends of mine who make it brought it down to Gainesville and turned the Holiday Inn into one of Andy Warhol's factory parties. I've never actually made it myself, but I have participated a few times, use caution.

MM: I also read something about Alex, a committed smoker, an anti-smoking PSA and royalty checks...? For the benefit of those who may not know what a PSA is, can you explain what they are...

BLR: It's a Public Service Announcement, this one's like an anti-smoking radio commercial. I think they should take a picture of Alex, put him on a billboard, and just have it say "Cigarettes made me what I am today." in real ominous font, you'd fucking kill the whole tobacco industry in one fail swoop!

MM: Time to move into the personal, if that's okay with you chaps....What's the craziest thing that you've seen, experienced or has happened to the band whilst on tour?

BLR: Damn that is a tough question to answer, uh, one time Eric ordered a small milkshake, and they accidentally gave him a large, but only charged him for a small, FUCKING CRAZY! That's probably the best story I can tell right now to protect to interests of certain parties who shall remain nameless, ask me at a show after a few drinks however and I'll talk all night.

MM: Sort of following on from the last question, with the internet "ruling" the world, and given that some people have nothing better to do with their lives than make shit up and stir up trouble, what's the strangest (unfounded of course, or maybe not....) rumour or story that you've heard about the band?

BLR: I've heard a lot of crazy shit, but you can't sweat it. People will say whatever they want whether it's based on fact or an actual experience or not. We've had a few people say that they heard we want to be "rock stars". Actually, I'd like to start a rumor about us right now: I heard the guys in Blacklist Royals are huge assholes, they think they're hot shit, they have a \$10,000 guarantee even at house shows! I heard that one time they played in this basement for 10 people, and when they kid didn't pay they sued him and made his parents take out another mortgage to just so they could give them their guarantee, what the fuck!

MM: What's next for The Blacklist Royals, what adventures lay waiting for you, just beyond the horizon?

BLR: We're doing some festivals this summer, touring with Riot Before, Nothington, and some other amazing bands, going to Canada in the fall, Europe in late fall/early winter, and we're going to start working on a new record this winter, shit's gonna be rad!

MM: If there's anything that you'd like to add, speak now or forever hold your peace...

BLR: "Semper Liberi" come out May 25th... buy it!



GEORGE TABB

"Freebird," I yell from the back of Manitoba's a few years back, the bar on Avenue A owned by The Dictator's lead singer.

"I can't believe you just yelled that," says the guy seated next to me at the bar, "you should have at least asked for 'Sweet Home Alabama'".

I look at the guy. Long hair. Imported beer. What does he know.

"Freebird," I yell again, after a couple sips of my Rolling Rock.

"They won't play it, George," the guys says, "besides, you do a great version of that song with Furious George. I think you did it the last time we played together. At The Continental."

I look at the guy. I think I sort of remember him.

"You liked our version?" I ask him.

"Yeah," he says, as he drinks his foo-foo beer.

I begin to like the guy.

"Did someone yell Freebird?" asks the guy on the makeshift stage at Manitoba's. It's actually just the floor, near the other end of the bar. With two mic stands.

"Free-fucking-bird," I yell. Hell, a minute earlier, the guy was asking for requests. I see Freebird as the ultimate request. A song real men can play.

"Okay," says the guy on the floor at the other end of the bar, "you asked for it, and we'll play it!"

Suddenly I hear those sliding guitar notes. Skynard's ultimate riff. I'm transported back to Florida for a few seconds. It's 1978. Actually, I was down there last year. It's still 1978.

"You asshole, now they are actually playing it!" says some librarian looking chick seated to my other side at the bar. She has the glasses and everything.

"Hey baby," I say, "If you ever lived in Florida, you'd understand that Freebird is the epitome of the South. The rage of all rednecks. The trucker's tune."

"You're full of shit. I grew up in Nashville. Freebird sucks," she tells me.

"Oh yeah?" I say, raising one eyebrow, and thinking about punching her in her old lady glasses. Why girls want to make themselves look purposely unattractive is beyond me. Behind her butt-ugly glasses this chick is pretty. But with the glasses, she looks like someone's rotting grandmother. Maybe it's a lesbian thing. But I quickly dismiss that idea when I see her kiss her boyfriend.

"Freebird is shit," she tells me.

I look over to the long haired guy with the imported beer. He just smiles, somehow telling me, "I told you you should have yelled for 'Sweet Home Alabama'".

Suddenly some girl near the "stage" stands up and starts yelling something in my direction. The back of the bar.

"What a rack," I say to the long haired guy next to me.

He nods his head.

The girl starts to scream more and more, and waves at us.

"Ya think she's trying to get our attention?" I say to the guy.

"I dunno," he says. Musicians.

I look at her waving frantically. Maybe she's trying to say something to Parker Posey's retarded doppelganger seated next to me. Or the chick with the pack of Camels on the bar, who's standing behind me. Or the other guy to my left.

The girl keeps waving, and I keep looking at her.

"I think she knows you," says Handsome Dick Manitoba, from behind the bar. His bar.

I give Handsome Dick the "whatever" nod and keep drinking my beer.

Actually I'm glad Richard "Handsome Dick" Manitoba opened his own bar. It gives us old punk rockers a cool place to hang out. And everyone knew it was Dick's dream to have his own bar one day, and he finally did it. With class. There is a really good sounding P.A. system, a huge television, an awesome upstairs, a comfy downstairs, and most importantly, huge deer or

moose antlers on the wall. Can't have a bar called Manitoba's without the antlers. Oh, those, and the pictures of the Dictators hung strategically all over the place.

The girl at the other end of the bar continues to wave as I think about how proud I am of Manitoba opening his own bar. Most punks I know at his age work on Wall Street, or are dead.

Same difference.

But not Manitoba. Besides still kicking it with The Dictators, who basically coined the term "punk rock", along with The Ramones, Manitoba now has a place where everyone knows his name. They couldn't miss it. It's in bright blue neon letters in the bar's window.

Manitoba's.

And am I glad for that. Imagine if he'd called it "Handsome Dicks". Christ.

Opening a bar like that on Avenue B would just be asking for a place with some real backroom action.

"Excuse me, but you sure are good looking!"

"If you think I'm good looking, have a look at my dick!"

"Wow, that's one Handsome Dick!"

Nope. Manitoba's is a much better name.

"Dude, she looks like she is going to throw something at you," says the long haired foo-foo beer drinking musician next to me.

I look at the girl who has given up waving in our direction. She now has something in her hands, and is motioning like she is gonna throw it at us.

"I think she knows you," says Granny.

All of a sudden the girl hurls something and it flies directly toward my head. I lift my hand up like I used to see Thurman Munson do, and try my best to catch the object like the old, dead, Number 15.

Of course I miss, and it clips the long haired guy in the head before hitting the ground.

I look at the girl and she's pointing directly at me, mouthing the words, "pick it up."

The guy with the long hair does. It's a napkin.

We both open it and find nothing. Not even a note written in lipstick that says "fuck you" or "redrum".

The next thing I know the girl with the nice boobies is upon both of us, yelling that we lost the object inside the napkin.

She starts to look for whatever it is on the floor, and as she does, I can see down the back of her jeans. Nice ass.

"I think she knows you," says the long haired guy.

"She looks familiar," I lie back to him. She's about as familiar as he is.

"I found it George," the girl yells, as she stands up and hands me a locket type thing.

"What's this?" I ask the girl.

"It's a silver pendant with a magic crystal inside," she tells me, "and it's just for you, George. To remind you of me."

I thank her politely for the strange gift, and go back to drinking my beer. Whatever.

"How come you never call me?" asks the girl.

"Huh?" I say to her.

I never see you around, and you never call. When we were together you couldn't keep your hands off me," she says.

"Do I know you?" I ask the twentyish brunette with a body to die for.

"George," she says as she punches my shoulders with both hands, "It's me, Tina!"

"Tina?" I say, not knowing who in the hell "Tina" is.

"Yeah!", she says, then hugs me. Real hard. I can feel her erect nipples touch my t-shirt.

"So how have you been?" I ask her, not knowing who in the hell I'm talking too, and not really caring. As long as she hugs me again.

"Oh, okay," she says, "I've had some tough times lately, but who hasn't?"



Anyway, how's the band? How's Nick?"

How does she know Nick, my stepfather?

"Um, fine," I say to the pretty young thing.

"Do you think he ever heard us?" she asks.

"Heard us what?" I say, playing along like I even remotely know what the hell is going on.

"Fucking," she says.

Granny Glasses overhears this and looks at me. The guy with the long hair misses this as he's busy talking to Manitoba.

"Fucking?" I repeat, stunned.

"Yeah, we were pretty loud in your old bedroom. I remember one time when I was really horny, I yelled really loud, and I think I heard your mom laughing."

I looked at this girl. I had to know her. Hell, I had to have slept with her.

She knew about my old bedroom on West Fourth Street. About my mom and Nick. She had to be one of the dozen or so I had done that with. Well, maybe two dozen. But I don't want to brag. But which one. Tina? Shit.

Didn't ring any bells.

"So what else is new with you?" I ask her, hoping she'll tip me off to some clue so my alcohol and pill soaked brain could figure out this conundrum.

"Well, since you, Wendy, and your parents saw me in that movie at The Anthology, I've done some other movie work," she explains, "In fact, I'm gonna be in a movie called Redneck Rampage this summer.

The Anthology.

On Second Avenue.

That Movie.

Wendy, my ex-wife.

My Parents.

Tina.

Holy shit.

Tina. My old girlfriend. Well, one of them. The one with the

knockers that used to work at CBGB when I did as well.

She was so hot that all my friends went crazy over her.

Eventually we broke up, for among other reasons, her blowing my guitarist, Marc.

And that night. At the Anthology. That night. It all came back to me.

Tina had called my house to invite my parents and me and Wendy to a screening of a movie she had a starring role in.

"What kind of movie?" I asked her. After all, it was Tina.

"Oh, a full length," she had told me, "it's about the Kennedy assassination."

"Cool," I told her.

She then told me I HAD to bring my parents and Wendy, my new girlfriend at the time, that they'd love the movie.

So I did.

Halfway through the awful art film, where they kept showing Tina as Jackie O, in the back of that car, I had told my mom that the movie wasn't very good, and perhaps we should sneak out while it was still dark in the theater.

"No George," said my mom, "Tina was nice enough to call and invite all of us, so we'll watch the whole film."

My mom was nice like that. All considerate and shit. She didn't want to hurt Tina's feelings. She had liked Tina. Thought she was a bit much for me to handle, but liked her. Even after she found out that Tina had gone down on my fellow Letch Patroller while I was away on tour with The False Prophets. In my own bedroom.

"She's young, George," my mom had told me when she saw me breaking shit around my room in a jealous rage, "and young girls do that sort of thing."

As the movie continued, the art slowly turned to bad porn. Tina started to show up in the movie naked. I put my hands over my eyes as I was nestled between my mom and Wendy. Christ, the last thing I wanted them seeing was her vagina.

"This kinda sucks," I said to both of them at one point, "Lets go!"

"I kinda like it," said Nick.

"Just like your naked 'art' books," I quipped back at him. I didn't want him seeing Tina's woo woo, either. My guitarist already had. And that was enough.

"George," my mom whispered to me, "I'm an adult, I can handle this kind of thing."

"But I can't," I told my mom. This had sort of happened before. My mom and Nick had taken my little brothers and I to see "Kentucky Fried Movie"

when we were kids. It looked like a kiddy movie from the commercials.

Once inside the theater, though, we saw bits like "Catholic High School Girls In Trouble," and that last bit where some chick fucks her boyfriend in front of some News Anchormen on television, who watch, drooling.

When the lights went on, I pretended I was asleep, as did my grandfather. I couldn't face the fact that I had watched people have sex with MY PARENTS.

And now it was worse. It wasn't only people having sex, it was Tina. And she was also pissing in a fishbowl, with the camera lens beneath it. And doing other gross things. With her vagina. And I had been in that vagina.

With my fingers. With my penis. With my mouth. And my mom, Nick, and Wendy knew it.

I felt like dying.

Finally, the film ended and the lights went on. Everyone applauded, including my mom.

On the way out of the theater Tina stopped us, and asked us, innocently, what we had thought of her performance.

"You were great," said my mom, "you are truly a great actress!"

"Thanks, Barbara," said Tina, and then hugged and kissed us all good-bye.

For the next few days I couldn't even talk to my parents. And when I did, Nick made some crack about things smelling like fish belonging in fishbowls.

Ha ha.

"Aren't you gonna introduce me to your friend?" says Tina, as she looks at the guy with the long hair seated next to me at the bar.

I'm too stunned to say anything. I think the shock of seeing Tina, along with the night's drugs and booze had put me into a temporary coma.

"Hi," says Tina to the long haired foo-foo beer drinker, "I'm Tina".

He shakes her hand and tells her his name.

"You really should be more social, George," Tina tells me.

I nod my head in silence. I can't speak.

"Well," says Tina, "I'm going back up front to where the band is. Come talk to me later. I'll introduce you to my friends."

I nod my head, still tongue tied. Tina hugs me again, then walks away.

"Dude," says the long haired guy, "she's hot!"

I nod my head.

"Any requests?" asks the singer guy on stage into the mic.

I look at the long haired guy. Then at Catwoman. She looks back at me and narrows her eyes. I raise one eyebrow.

Then I clear my throat.

"Freebird," I think I yell.

"Huh?" the guy on stage says.

"Dude," says the long haired guy next to me, "why did you just yell 'fish-bowl'?"

Endnotes:

1. New "Call Of Duty" coming out this year from Activision called "Black Ops". I think I'm gonna wet my pants! Also, Tim, the fine editor this great magazine tells me there is a new Torchwood series to come. I did wet my pants.
2. The new Dr. Who, Matt Smith, looks like Frankenstein in still photos, but really does capture The Doctor when he acts. I also like the girl who plays "Amy Pond". The show has been a bit dumbed down, probably for a new generation of kids, but still, it's the best thing on television. Ever. Next to Captain Jack of Torchwood, of course.
3. Sorry to have been so out of touch with friends via email and stuff. This whole 9/11 lawsuit shit and my health from that day is pissing me off to no end. And when I turn that anger inward, depression. So, a word or two to the Obama administration about the current oil spill. WAKE THE FUCK UP! Toxins kill people. Clean up this disaster right, and warn people of the danger of even getting this shit on their skin, nevermind inhaling it. And remind everyone it's not just BP, it's the whole oil industry, and above that, the collaboration of corporations and our governments for the sake of greed. Over and Fucking Out!

HOT WATER MUSIC

A sunny day in Wales? Must mean one thing Hot Water Music is in town and they've brought some of the Florida Heat to Newport. Mass Movement caught up with Chuck Ragan for a chat and was lucky enough to be joined by Leatherface legend Frankie Stubbs in the process.
Interview by Bunky and BT.

Photo's by Crissy Piper & Mark Breemer

MM: What's it like to be back on the road with HWM? Playing shows in places like this?

CR: It's a great time (Frankie Stubbs joins the table, greetings are exchanged) this is Frankie Stubbs Right Here. It's real good you know we don't have George with us right now we have Dave Raun Playing drums with us and he's just an animal behind the kit and he's been an old friend to all of us for years. We wouldn't have done it if George didn't give us the go ahead



MM: First of all for the people reading this who don't know, who are Hot Water Music?

CR: Who are we? (Laughs) We're just a bunch of old friends that somehow ended up at the same place at the same time. Just you know came together and got along well, lived and breathed the music for I don't know 16/17 years something like that and were still doing the same thing that we love to do. Nothing fancy about it were just good friends who like to play Rock and Roll together.

MM: How did it all start? What influenced you as a band that gave you the drive and ambition to get to where you are today?

CR: Oh man, that could be a very long answer. I guess to start off we were all different and played in separate bands. Then we moved to Gainesville from two little towns on the gulf side of Florida, we actually moved up there as two separate bands. When we moved up there we all had our own plans for these two bands to do our own things, then the two singers from each band ended up going off and doing their own things and the last four people standing were the four of us and we just continued on doing it that way. The only reason we're still here today is because I just feel like we've just done our best to keep playing honest music, we've been honest with ourselves and put our friendship first before anything and connected with all the supporters, the friends and the fans in that same way. It's you know a respect thing we'll be honest with you if your honest with us and that has been the key to our longevity. I guess you could say.

but he's playing drums with Against Me now and he's pretty much full time and he has no control over his schedule with that machine, so he's kind of up in the air and we just had lots of people asking us to play shows, so we called our friends to see if they we're up for it. It's been a blast on this tour we've been playing a mix of festival gigs and club shows, we definitely prefer the club shows but it's always nice to go to the festivals and get a shower and some good catering before you stand in front of a bunch of people who couldn't care less who you are and have no idea, so we just do our best.

MM: Hot Water Music has influenced nearly a whole generation of UK bands, how does it feel to have that sort of influence on a countries scene?

CR: (Laughs) I have no idea on how to answer that. I guess definitely since we've been a band for so long, over the years and I'm sure that Stubbs could say the same thing but When you're a band for so long and you run with so many different friends, you meet these kids at the show and then 5/6 years, 10 years later you still know them and now they're playing in bands and it's excelled more than they thought it would and it's always nice to see the evolution of people coming to the shows as kids and then becoming part of these big bands or whatever. Every once in a while those same people come up to you and say I saw my first show with you guys and I went home and bought a guitar and it's overwhelming, an honour but you know I don't think that any one band can take that sort of credit on their shoulders. When I was a kid there was always a ton of great people coming through but it was always the people that were within my circle, my good friends that I was really inspired

by and kept pushing me.

MM: The promoter of the show has stressed the importance of this show being in Newport and after the closure of TJ's it was a bit up in the air regarding where the show was going to be, Do you think it was important for the show to stay in Newport and do you have any fond memories of TJ's or Newport itself?

CR: Yeah, TJ's was always an amazing gig to play, with the history of the place and the people who ran it and you know it was like a little hole in the wall.

FS: He was a legend

CR: I mean he held it together for how many years.

FS: 20 years something like that, When John Peel used to announce gigs on his show he'd always describe it as the Legendary TJ's and it was Legendary it was probably one of the most famous venues in the world, it was like CBGB's.

CR: There are not many places like that around the world or anywhere, how many Venues keep it going for 20 plus years, not many.

FS: He used to lock you in the place and wouldn't let you leave the place until you sang him a song, he had an acoustic guitar there and he used to say play me something, anything and then you can leave.

CR: Nobody leaves this place without singing the blues.

FS: The second time we played there he took us round to his house, cooked us food. The bloke was a God and why he fucking did it for so long I don't know. I mean he must have been Insane to want to do it for so long. There's a great story from one time we played there and Iron Maiden were doing a tour of smaller bars so they'd booked out TJ's to rehearse and I think John and his wife lived upstairs at the time and his wife chucked them out for being too loud and they said "Don't you know who we are?" and she said "I don't care who you fucking are, get out". It even made the newspapers he had a cutting behind the bar.

MM: You recently did a 7 inch for record store day. All over the UK local independent record stores have been closing because of recession / lack of support. How is the state of stores in America? Is the battle to keep independent shops open as bad as over here?

CR: Sure, it always has been but I think that's a good thing and a bad thing, The thing about the whole past decade or whatever and the way the industries changed like with the digital thing it seems like for the whole huge massive bands it really makes a difference but for a lot of us you know on the level we're at and where we come from, we never sold that many records anyway and we've always continued to make vinyl. I feel like there is always going to be an underground and whatever genres come and go, whatever things get popular and die down there will always be an Underground in one form or the other and I think vinyl is immersed in that realm. Nowadays its crazy kids come and we always have vinyl on the table and a lot of these kids buy these vinyl records and they don't even own a record player but it's the first vinyl record they've ever bought, it's amazing cause it inspires them to go out and buy a record player. I think it's kind of hard everywhere but to us we're not worried one bit it's one of those things that one way or the other it's going to survive anyway and we're going to just carry on the same way that we have been doing. We're still going to press records, there's always going to be at least a couple of companies out there that still press wax.

FS: It's better because it's really specialist, not like mass produced. They're really specialist companies and they can do anything you know, the things they can do with vinyl.

CR: We work with a company called Pirate Press, they're based out of San Francisco and they're just a bunch of punks who like to make crazy looking vinyl, strange colours, strange cuts and shapes. The things they're doing with vinyl is ridiculous just absolutely ridiculous and knowing them they're going to be around for a long time whether it's millions of people buying the records or a select few.

FS: Companies aren't making them anymore, you know it's all digital downloads not even CD's.

CR: I definitely think that Vinyl will outlive CD's; it's kind of already going that way.

FS: People just don't go to record stores anymore, it's all digital download they even download the cover art and put it together themselves.

MM: You've released quite a few records now, which one was your favourite to create? Which one holds the most memories?

CR: That's a tough one man I don't know. I mean the way we all do it; a record is like a journal entry. It could be the absolute best time of your life but it could be the worst sounding record or it could be the other way around the worst time of your life but the best sounding record, you know (Laughs). My point is each one definately holds weight and you look back on those and you're like that's what I was going through back then and looking back through those old catalogues / songs and playing them is just like looking at an old diary or an old journal, What captivated you enough in the first place to write a song. I feel like I could speak for some of us on the same level but if you believe that something affects you enough in a positive or negative way, if it moves you enough then most likely its worth telling the story or getting it off your chest, for us it turns into songs. So it's hard for me to say that this one is more important than that one because none of us would be here now if we hadn't of written those songs.

FS: People say it's because I can't afford a therapist. Get it down, you know set it in stone.

CR: Definately, Get it off your chest, be done with it and move on.

MM: I read on your website that when you got some time spare you're looking at making a new record, can you tell us a bit more about that?

CR: For Hot Water Music? Yeah we've actually been writing and just really, really enjoying it. The best part about is we're complete free agents right now, we have no label, we have no management, nothing. It's just like the beginning again, it's just us there's no group, no one telling us that you have to do this thing and this now. Man it just feels great because we're all excited to do a new record and as far as when it's going to happen we couldn't care less, we'll do it when we're ready and we'll record it when it feels right and that's the best feeling in the world.

MM: In regards to that have you ever thought about self releasing it?

CR: Absolutely, my wife and I a few years back started our own mom and pop shop record label called Ten Four Records. We've been releasing small vinyl releases and Limited stuff and everything. Absolutely, we've definately talked about you know doing it ourselves and not worrying about anything, it takes more work but if that's what has to happen then that's what we'll do.

MM: Is this one of the last dates? Or have you got more?

CR: Portsmouth, Then we go to France, we have a gig in Spain and then we fly to Canada for some shows.

MM: Are you going to be doing any festivals? Tours?

CR: I'm going to be coming over here with my own stuff I'm coming over with Gaslight Anthem in the Fall and that's kind of nuts. I mean with us Jason plays in Senses Fail, Chris Wollard is doing the ship thieves and they all have plans to do stuff. For Hot Water Music the next thing we're doing is Australia with the Bouncing Souls, but we're just concentrating on writing, that's our main focus just writing new songs.

MM: Thanks for doing the Interview, is there anything you would like to add?

CR: No, I'm just happy to be here man, I mean here with Stubbs and Leatherface it's great. (laughs) Today we're all winners (Today is the day USA and England won their World Cup Matches). England, USA we're all winners.

FS: You came top of the fucking league you bastards and you don't even know how to play.

CR: (Laughs) I don't know how that happened; I don't even know what it's all about.

MM: We'll be lucky if Germany finish 2nd.

FS: I'd rather play Germany than Uruguay at least we know more about Germany, they played really well in their first game but I think we played better today but I guess in the next 10 years the Americans will definately win it, when they work it out you know this is how you play this game and this is how you win it.

CR: Figure out how to make money off it and then you know (laughs).

MM: Thanks again for the Interview.

CR: No thanks boys, thanks for the support. I'm really looking forward to tonight it's going to be great.

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So, I guess there isn't anyone out there in punk rock land who hasn't heard of No Idea Records, the label that put Gainesville on the Mohawk map, but how many of us actually know anything about 'em, apart from the Stressface logo that adorns more and more of our ever expanding record collections? Bunky and me figured we'd find out as much as we could by talking to head honcho Var...

Interview by Bunky & Tim Mass Movement

MM: As ever, the best place to start is at the beginning - No Idea started as a zine didn't it? Why did you originally start putting the zine out and, how, in your case anyway, did a zine become a label? How many of the original No Idea zinesters are still involved with the label, and are you still in touch with all of the original crew? What do you remember most about the formative days of No Idea?

Var: The local high schools were rezoned in the mid-80's, so all of a sudden a lot of the punk, Goth, new wave, whatever-you-call-it kids ended up going to the same school. There was an energy to create that burned in our bellies. We were all kids looking for something to do. Hormones raging, questions abounding. Who were we? What were we doing? What does it all mean?

Boredom is death. For some reason, a few of us decided to work on a zine. The main catalyst was Rats Magazine, which was a comic that Ken Cofelt and some friends of his had made a few issues of over a couple years. I was blown away by the idea that kids could actually do something like this. It was very empowering. I wanted in and I wanted to start creating something of our own. We picked up from there. It was simply the need for an outlet. Many of us were taking a Graphic Arts class as well. The teacher was very supportive too and allowed us to learn hands-on how to use the

printing press, etc. This was 1985. For our sixth issue, we included a 7" by the local band DOLDRUMS. This was the start of the label, circa 1988. We were very interested in hollering about the local scene and bands, so it was natural to ask to include our favourite local band at the time on the first record. (I just found out that Russ, the guitar player, died earlier this week at age 50.)

I am the only one from the original loose group that remains. The last one to move was Ken and that was back in 1988, as I recall. He contributed a couple times after he moved and we remained friends. We infrequently talk, but for some reason I still feel a strong connection with him. I'm just terrible at corresponding and consider it a fault of mine. I care so much it hurts, but get wrapped up in the panic of the day, leaving off the rest for the next day. With

modern social networking websites, I do see that a lot of these old friends have created families and businesses... and I wonder what a grand reunion would look like! I remember working bizarre long hours and fitting bits in-between school classes, etc. I did poorly in school... but if I did not go through that process, I would likely not have met a lot of people or learned the cut-n-paste graphics of the pre-desktop-computer world.

MM: Having sprung from the ashes of a zine, have you ever been tempted to do another magazine, or is there some overwhelming reason stopping you? If so, what? What, if anything do you miss about putting together your own zine? How do you think zine culture has changed during the last decades?

Var: Creating a zine took so much time... it was overwhelming. As we started focusing more and more on records, that became a more motivating outlet. I just did not have what it took to start a new issue, knowing it would take a year or two to finish. Time was the reason I did not start issue #13. There were hundreds of free newsprint zines for a while there by the mid-90's. So many that came with free CDs. When we did the issues with CDs, it was still a pretty new idea. Within a few years, everyone was doing it. CD pressing

prices fell, sales went up. Record labels had money to advertise a lot. Zines thrived. As that well dried up in the 90's, the zines fell away. Now it is mostly webzines. Ad money is scarce and spread thin. I have wanted to do a zine "in theory" over the years, but simply have no time. This is too bad in a way, but my focus is elsewhere. I do not write very often anymore either, which is a downside.

MM: Did you see it lasting this long? No Idea that is... What's been the most dramatic change in the label since you first put music to record?

Var: Absolutely not. I had no real long-range

plan. In 1994, I had saved nearly \$10,000 from working a job for four years and living cheap. I took that as a challenge to go full time with the zine and label. I expected that I would have to get a art time job within six months to help cover the bills... but I never did. Strange. I always had a "this could end at any moment" phantom in the back of my mind. I have never kicked that; it's still there. The most dramatic change? I suppose that would be the slow growth and mutation that has occurred. We started a "distribution" in 1995 that shifted and evolved. We operate now with ten people (plus a few interns) running the various facets of what we do: label, mail-order, wholesale distribution, press wrangling / PR... I am the only one officially employed by "the label" but there is a lot of crossover. That is a big change! It feels great to work with people we care about and offer a job that allows them to do the



**NO IDEA
RECORDS!**

things they are really here to do: play music, make art, start families, etc.

MM: Since you started the label, is there a band or record that you didn't get to put out but had the chance to and wish you had? Why, and why didn't you do the record?

Var: There have been a lot of bands that have asked when we were too busy to consider adding another. There were a few that I did not think to ask... and a few that were supposed to, but broke up instead, ha!

MM: Obviously you've released quite a few bands from Gainesville over the years, is there something in the water that makes them so good or is there an underground No Idea Boot camp that you're not telling us about? Is No Idea a big part of the local community or do you try to keep yourselves to yourselves? Why?

Var: That would be the mystery of Gainesville. There are a LOT of bands here... multiple labels... several great places to play. We sometimes electroshock bands and subject them to strobe lights and nature films. Does that count? I suppose you'd have to ask around. By extension, folks that help run this ship organize benefits, play shows, and otherwise participate in the local community.

MM: Do you think that Gainesville and Florida have had an impact on the label and bands from the area, and if so, what kind of impact do you think it has? How, do you think the scene in Gainesville differs from other well known and long established scenes, such as LA, DC or NYC? Has, in your opinion, the Gainesville scene evolved purely through its own merits, or has any external influences or other scenes helped its development?

Var: Yes. Gainesville is far from being in a bubble. The individuals here are influenced by bands and scenes from all over the world. Perhaps vice versa? We live in a pretty small town.

MM: Like most labels you must get a lot of demos through, how do you decide which ones to listen too? Or do you generally not have the time? Do you find that with the Internet and Mp3's being around that fewer bands are sending demo's out through traditional methods?

Var: I rarely have time to listen to demos... every now and then, maybe? Right. Fewer bands are bothering to mail CDRs and whatnot.

MM: Following on from the above, what kind



of impact and effect do you think the internet has had on punk rock and music as a whole - in terms of label, bands etc.? From personal perspective, has it been beneficial or detrimental to No Idea? Why?

Var: Computers are both great and horrible. I'm in a van with Young Livers right now, heading home after a couple days in Charlotte, NC, getting the van repaired. Yesterday they started organizing a tour that starts in a week. All but one show is now confirmed, two of which came together while I was typing my answers. That's the internet for you (and a few phone calls). Some people take all the music they can find, others do not. Some people will support bands, labels, and communities in various ways. Others do not. These are polar extremes and lots of people fall somewhere in between. If no one does their part, then it all collapses. If people pitch in, then things live on, evolve, and change.

MM: We're constantly being told that we live in the digital age, and as such I was wondering if you thought that the traditional role of the record label was changing, or evolving, and if so, how? How do you think this change will affect the way the music "business" operates? Does digital really mean the death of vinyl and CD? If so, why and if not, why not?

Var: We bob and weave. Sting like a butterfly, float like a bee. Nothing is static, everything changes. Some labels are shifting to managerial roles and act more as licensing and promotion companies... image builders... so I hear. I've been hearing about the death of this and that for 20+ years. Some people like records, some people like CDs, and some people like sword fish. Some people like burritos.

MM: As with any technical, forward thinking achievement, human nature always manages to twist and manipulate it so that it becomes part of the lowest common denominator, and in the net's case, that usually revolves around gossip and rumour. So, what are the strangest internet rumours that you've heard about both yourself and No Idea?

Var: You tell me. But really, you should read what that one bloke posted about you on "dubyadubyadubya dot bangers and mash dot co dot uk backslash wankers"

MM: Hot Water Music, Against Me! And Less than Jake went on to be pretty successful in their careers; did their success change the



Label in any way? Are you proud of what they achieved? What's your favourite record by each of them and why is it thus? Conversely, what's your least favourite record by each of the fore-mentioned bands, and why?

Var: When a record and band do better than break even, then they help to press another band's record. That's all there is to it, really. Of course it is gratifying to work hard alongside a band and champion them as they roll down the road. Sure, we're proud when they stick by their convictions and blaze a trail, undaunted.

AGAINST ME! "Reinventing..."

HOT WATER MUSIC "Fuel..."

LESS THAN JAKE "Hello Rockview"

No way in hell I'd say a bad word about any of those bands. Respect, support, inspiration.

MM: If you were going to live on a deserted island somewhere and you could only take one No Idea Record with you which one would it be and why? Where did the Stressface logo come from?

Var: I love how you put two unrelated questions into a two-part question...

was fun and familiar. It was nice to be in someone else's town and fully off-the-clock. CHAOS IN TEJAS a couple years ago was great... and with any luck I will be at the one in a week two. Those are the only other Fests I've been to since the mid-90's. Oh, but there was also one Michigan Fest in like 1999? I forget. That was the first REALLY GOOD, well run Fest I had been to. It set the level.

MM: I gotta know man... What's with the beards? Why do so many No Idea bands have beards, or start growing bands when they join the label? Is it some rites of passage thing, some kind of weird initiation type deal, a secret 'Order Of Te Grand Beard' that exists within the confine of the label, or something else, and if so, what?

Var: I have no clue. I am not capable of growing anything beyond a teenage hoodlum scruff, so... I cannot comment from a personal perspective. They are either lazy or really into Grover Cleveland. They are smuggling acorns.

MM: How has parenthood changed you Var?

Var: Tim, it had me lactate more regularly. But that eventually dried up.



ha! "Do you know how to change a flat tire? What's your favourite ice cream flavo(u)r?" I would take a compilation. Not sure which one. I drew the stress-face on break at my old job, circa... 1990? It originally had a bowtie and a topknot. It may have been an attempt to draw a character of mine from the 1980's called "Amazingly Boy." Ken's character was called "Pill Salad". They had adventures.

MM: Let's talk Fest - when, how and why did you come up with the original idea for Fest?

Var: I did not, Tony did. It's his jam. (I like toast.)

MM: How do you think it's changed and evolved since its inception?

Var: More bands, less sleep.

MM: Who do you think, have put in the best performances at Fest, and why?

Var: The people left standing at the end of the night always turn in the best performances.

MM: How do you think Fest differs from other music based festivals, what makes it different?

Var: Well, of late, there are a LOT more FESTS. I just went to RADFEST. It

MM: Has it changed the way that you view and think about No Idea and punk rock, and if so how?

Var: Parenthood changes everything, but mostly diapers. We got a lot less sleep for a while. Matt just became a poppa too. They are busting out all over. No Idea nursery and day care and records. Ivo and Vivie know how to fold record covers... and have hand-coloured a few. It makes me work harder and want to do right(er).

MM: Which No Idea five releases do you think best sum up everything that the label is? Why?

Var: Methane, Carbon Dioxide, Sweat, Urine, and Poop. Why? Because that's what we do.

MM: What's next on the No Idea horizon?

Var: Sinking other pirate ships and returning with galleys full of exotic spices and treasure.

MM: If there's anything that you'd like to add....

Var: I am so tired I am nearly delirious. All you can eat taco party + 8 hour drive - sleep = who am we? I answered question 1-4 a couple weeks ago. The rest in a van around midnight. I'm not driving. Do what you do because you are driven. And if that does not work out, try driving yourself.

IT RUINED MY LIFE...



Ha,ha well... It all started when I was about 4 years old. My parents got divorced. And even though I didn't know at the time; my father had pretty much left my mother and I and was out of the picture for a while, he popped back in and out of my life for the next couple of years while my mother and I lived in a two bedroom apartment together in Linden, NJ. Though I was being neglected, I always felt as if things were just normal because I didn't know any better.

Once I hit around six years old, the relationship with my father had been none of the ordinary to what I can see, especially when I was the only kid on my Tee-Ball Team who's father wasn't there after the game. He told me countless times he would be there; he even promised and swore on it. But he never came. I could never figure out why he wanted to lie to me, or let me down. But, I for some reason keep myself positive and just went with the flow.

As I got older, I started to realize I had major trust issues with everyone and was completely lost from not having that "father figure" in my childhood. Lying was all too normal to me and I was constantly making excuses to try and justify myself, even though I was wrong. I was a complete mystery to everyone around me, including myself. The only thing that kept me going was a piece of wood and six strings.

I began writing songs to let out my emotions and to try and figure out, who Chris Dechert really is. Every time I would write a new song, I would find

myself learning why I am the way I am and how my life unfolded the way it had. I also learned to understand the fact that I am me, and I am never going to change my past or have any control over it. So from there, I began to see things differently.

In life, we all have millions of experiences, which we will grow and learn from everyday. Some so subliminal, we don't even realize it. I sat around and thought for so long about how I had been neglected, and how my emotions had been played with like a toy. Most of the time it didn't affect me and I could just forget about it and move on. But I finally learned that the truth is, I have to accept what happened and know that I am the way I am from my father, and all I can do is be okay with the fact that I was raised differently. I will most likely always have issues with certain things for the rest of my life, but actually realizing this is what saved me. It taught me to look passed that and appreciate my shot at life. It taught me to not dwell on the negatives, find what makes me happy, and dwell on that instead. The music that I write personally and the music that we write together as a band is not only written to help inspire listeners to keep their heads high, but also to remind ourselves how keep fighting for happiness. Nothing should bring you down. Ever. You can turn any dream into a reality.

Chris Dechert

BREATHING BLUE

NOW THEN GADGIE...



Years ago when I was but a bairn, and a baby punk rocker who thought The Clash were the greatest band ever (except Blondie, and of course before I had discovered Piss Tank Twat) I had heard much talk of a band called Discharge. In the days before the internet however it was a case of scouring the second hand shops and keeping an ear to the ground if you wanted to get your lugs round some obscure, you-won't-find-it-in-HMV-shit. So there I was in a tiny little grubby record shop in some godforsaken corner of the UK where a little man with a beard sat listening to the theme tune to Davey Crockett and singing along happily in the corner. Digging through filthy crates and piles of records I pulled out a shabby looking LP which bore the splatter font writing we all know and love of the mighty Discharge. "Ooh" thought I, that's that there band everyone reckons are great. Two quid lighter, (and that was a lot of money in them days, I remember when all this was fields etc etc) I proudly walked out intent on rushing home, dropping the needle and hearing what all the fuss was about. Well bugger me, what a bag of wank. It was a dirge of slow, boring metal. Back of the record cupboard for you my over rated, disappointing new acquisition, and back to listening to "The Joshua Tree" by U2 and the first two Clash albums (and probably some Cyndi Lauper, but I'll keep that quiet). Time goes on, The Clash are still great and one day months later I decide to give that Discharge LP another go, but whoops, leave the record player speed on 45rpm and not 33rpm. Suddenly I had an epiphany. It was if a god had parted the clouds and shone a light right in to my bedroom and boomed in a booming voice at me "Marv, this, my son, is the soundtrack for the rest of your life." I had discovered the Discharge "Why" 12" was not an LP and in fact a 12" despite the fact that it had nine songs on. Cyndi Lauper 12"s only had three on. Indeed though, life was never the same after that thunderous and devastating blast of apocalyptic noise bursting forth from my speakers. I played the bugger all afternoon, with a break for the footy results and probably Dr Who or the A Team, and ruddy well loved it. Fast forward more years than I care to think about and I still love The Clash, but my ever growing vinyl collection is full to the brim of utterly brutal, black and white sleeved, cities in ruins, bombs falling, women and children dead, skulls on the cover, bullet belts and studs total fucking Discharge music. It could have been all so different however if I hadn't had a 45 not 33 blunder and so record labels I urge you to heed this warning. Put the fucking speed you want the record to be played at on the record. Not that difficult is it? Over the years this has become something of an irritant for me and my obsessive hunting down of punk vinyl. There are many more guilty culprits and I am going to "out" them now. Dutch monsters Shikari blew Boston to smithereens many moons ago with the incredible Seein Red and I went to see 'em a few more times so good was the brutal double bill of Nederthrash. When at a gig more recently then and Luke informs me that he has the new Grinding Halt LP and they were in/sound like/served Shikari in a cafe once or whatever I immediately suggested he hand it over in exchange for my hand full of coinage. Looking forward to some devastating Dutch destruction however, I was sorely disappointed with the sludgy borefest that was like early pre-play at the wrong speed mix up Discharge. Not fit to be described as Shikari type stuff. That Shikari/Seein Red split CD like a credit card that has one song each that lasts about 24 seconds is better than this! Again, back of the record

cabinet and thoughts of flogging it at the next gig in the Gadgie zine distro box. As with the mighty "Why" 12" however, I had another go on it and this time bothered to read the insert and there beneath the lyrics, credits, thanks list, pictures and stuff was a little line of type informing me to play it at 45! A ha! Whaddya know it's a belter after all and saved from record cabinet oblivion. Languishing in this forbidden zone sadly are a few more vinyl pieces who become tarred with the "which speed?" brush. This problem manifested itself once when I acquired a split 7" by utterly ridiculous grind loonies Senseless Apocalypse and Gore Beyond Necropsy. Now there are people out there, in fact 99.99% of the population, who would tell me "You get what you ask for if you buy a record like that Marv". Mrs Marv is one such person who has perfected the art of eye ball rolling when I say things like "Shit, listen to these song titles love!" She never ceases to amaze me how unimpressed she is, in fact my wife has taken unimpressed to a whole new level when informed of songs bestowed with titles such as "Anal Driller"; "Zombiew Harlem-Psycho Sick Lobotomy"; "Hepatic Malodorous Virulency In Adherent Tumorous System" or my favourite "Cockchopper". Along with five other tracks that made up the Gore ... side anyhow. At least they bothered to name their little ditties. Senseless Apocalypse treat us to 16 (Yes! 16!) tracks on their half all called "No Title" apart from the first one which was imaginatively labelled "Intro". Obviously a must buy then. Needle in groove and good gracious me, what a fucking beautiful noise. I figured on 45 it was just too unhinged, but chill out at 33 and it's still ridiculous and off the scale. An old trick is look for a sample. If someone is screaming and grunting it's not always obvious if you are on the right speed, but get a sample of someone talking and you're in. No chance. The samples on here are just as bonkers. I settled on what I thought was the right speed and added it to a tape I did for Mr Rum Lad and this record actually lead to us having an argument about the right speed. I offered to tape it again on the other speed, but after listening to both sides on both speeds I'm none the wiser. Great lyrics though ... Early on in my days as a regular at the Indian Queen punk do's (What's an Indian Queen punk do? Get's drunk and shouts at bands! Hur Hur!) I chose what I believed to be a choice selection from a distro of a passing band when I added the Mine/Dawnbreed 7" to my collection. Yep, you guessed it. I had to buy another Dawnbreed record to find out if they were brutal metallic, screaming hardcore with a cheesy American lady sample or sludge monsters with a thick sounding yokel sample ... So, I'd better leave it there or I'll go off on one about split records which don't label the sides with which band is on it. In summary, if you do a record label, do you want it on your conscience that someone incorrectly doesn't like Discharge. Could you live with yourself? 'Cos it would be all your fault Mr I'm Too Cool To Put The Speeds on The Label. I put this together listening to a TSOL LP and it plays on 33.

GADGIE fanzine is always available punks! Issue 24 out now. An English pound from Marv, PO Box 93, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 7YB, Engerland. The "Now Then Gadgie..." book is also out! Visit me in cyberspace at www.myspace.com/getintherefrank.

SCATTERED, SMOTHERED & CHOPPED...

The term break-out space is most simply defined as a quiet area that is separated from your place of work. At Tech-Tron Industries, this was the third floor broom closet. This spacious storage closet was larger than any of the cubicles that me and my fellow computer geeks were forced to slave in day after meaningless day.

One bright Wednesday afternoon, we were enjoying some stale coffee and cheap cigarettes in the presence of cleaning solutions and mops. We chatted amiably about general crap, this being our equivalent of water-cooler talk. Joe, Henry, Marie and I were all there. They affectionately called me 'The Weasel' because I had an amazing capacity to weasel my way out of doing any real work. Joe worked in the accounting department, Henry was a software engineer and Marie prided herself on being a self-certified cyberpunk. I considered myself an office drone extraordinaire. We were probably a boring bunch to others, but we entertained each other.

Anyway, we were smoking 503's and drinking yesterday's Haxwell Home in the janitor's storage closet when the world shattered. It broke up into tiny little pieces and floated into space. This seemingly catastrophic event caused very little stir among the populace of Earth. Most people continued about their day as if nothing happened, changing their plans only when they came to a jagged edge of ground. It was a nice change.

In the spirit of dog-whistle politics, the President of the United States of America scheduled a press conference where he laid the blame on the stresses of the sun and moon on the planet's crust. He stated quite clearly that it was not the fault of Indochina's solar energy program or the Mutoocratic Party. By the way he stated it was equally clear that he felt the blame rested entirely on the shoulders of Indochina's solar energy program and the Mutoocratic Party.

Soon it was 5 o'clock and time to go home for the day. Joe, Henry, Marie and I all met in the parking garage for our car-pool. This week it was my turn to drive so we crammed ourselves into my Hugo coupe. Nobody made disposable cars like the Hugoslavians. My little red crotch rocket started with a wheeze. With a grind of gears, we were headed home. Unfortunately the street ended at the corner of 13th Avenue and 69th Street. This was conveniently located in front of a MoreBuck's coffee shop so we piled out of my glorified clown car and headed in for some icy caffeine. The air was sweet and the mean-aged girl behind the counter was pretty. Henry hit on her for a few minutes before she grudgingly revealed the fact that she had just entered into a covenant marriage and was unavailable. This seemed like an extremely harsh way of telling a balding, pudgy older guy to buzz off, but that's what she said.

I got out my camera phone and addressed the group.

"Who's tired of Jowling? Who wants to try something new?" I said in my best used-car salesman voice.

I even winked and made that stupid little gun with my hand. Everyone was interested. It was an easy sale.

After I explained Happy-Slapping to my three amigos, we began. Marie had the most fun because none of us brutish men would hit her very hard and she could clobber us with no fear of reprisal. We got some great shots and I couldn't wait to upload them onto my computer at work.

We drank iced cappuccinos and smoked some Bleck and Wilds that Marie had hidden in her purse. We blatantly ignored the 'NO SMOKING' signs that were clinging to every surface. There were no other patrons and the chiquita behind the counter quit protesting when we found one for her.

As the only things to watch on the TV were news and Oprah, we decided to see if the shop's radio could get a decent rock station. We played with the

tuner for a minute before we found WASS 100 Rocks! They played the rock songs you didn't want to hear once, a thousand times each. By the time a song fell out of rotation, you would vomit every time you heard it. I mean, how many love songs to cracked-out hookers can a skinny dweeb with an electric guitar write anyway? Get a job and move out of your parent's house already!

We were just about to leave to try to find an alternate route home when my irritable bowel syndrome flared up. I struggled valiantly not to sling mud into my tighty-whities. I barely made it. I knew the gang would laugh at me and sing songs about diarrhea and sliding into home with my pants full of foam when I returned to the table, but it was all in good fun so I didn't mind. I've always felt that if you can't laugh at yourself you don't have the right to laugh at anybody else.

Half an hour and two rolls of toilet paper later, I was done and ready to re-enter society. After that little excursion into odor, I needed some outdoor air to clear my sinuses. As I had known, they started singing as soon as I was in sight. I sang right along with them and we all had a good time. We re-crammed ourselves into my gnome-mobile and turned around to try to find a road less traveled.

No go. The only option seemed to be to return to our office building so we could at least eat the crackers from the snack machine until the government got this whole mess straightened out. We reconvened in the third floor broom closet. There had been no more old coffee to drink so we reluctantly brewed a fresh pot. We were all out of cigarettes so we experimented a little. We ended up wrapping strands from a mop into old memos and smoking that. It was a little harsh but it satiated the need.

The evening passed. We assumed night must be coming soon, but without the Earth's bulk maintaining its solidity, we might be in sunshine all the time now. We were in a tiny windowless storage locker anyway and had no way to know. It was irrelevant. The workday started at 7 a.m. and ended at 5 p.m.

Today was over and it was not yet tomorrow. We passed the time by discussing the pros and cons of permission-based marketing and how it applied to the sale of unnecessary computer software such as Tech-Tron Industries sold. Eventually we all found a bit of floor to curl up on and slept.

At precisely 6:30 a.m. Joe's watch alarm beeped. We pulled our brains out of the magical world of sleep and into the new day. We washed up as best we could in the executive washrooms and headed to our respective cubicles.

According to the internet news, yesterday's near tragedy involving our planet's dissolution had been resolved. Apparently it had all been an elaborate magic trick involving Ravid Hopperstein and his famous mirrors. Our beloved country's ruling bodies declared this an act of high treason and had him sentenced to 20 years hard time. This meant that he would have to be Meline Neon's sound guy on her next 60 world tours. I would have plea-bargained for the death penalty had I been the accused but he felt he could beat the rap and so ended up with the maximum sentence the law allowed. Whatever, it worked out for me.

After about an hour of inane internet surfing, I headed back to the third floor broom closet. Joe, Henry and Marie had all beaten me there. It figures, their jobs were more demanding than mine and they needed their downtime more. The world's troubles forgotten for now, we relaxed amongst the pine floor cleaners and the straw brooms and settled in for a nice pot of room temperature coffee and a pack or two of cheap smokes. Life is good when you're with friends.

Jim Dodge Jnr.

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36 Crazyfists - Underneath A Northern Sky (Ferrett) DVD

This is a full-length rock-umentary about 36 Crazyfists, the affable alternative metal band from Anchorage, Alaska, and whilst the band's music veers into territories far too light and poppy for this particular scribe, when they're kicking out their metal jams, they have a certain energy that is undeniably endearing. This film makes three things very apparent: a) 36 Crazyfists are really nice guys, and thankfully totally lacking in the pretension department, b) it's really fucking cold where they're from, and c) the kids up there absolutely love them to bits, as is evidenced by the extensive footage from their hometown gig shot early last year. The

concert clips are well filmed and mixed, and the band turn in a very competent set, but the behind-the-scenes and archive stuff is more interesting, revealing just why 36CF are such a product of their environment. There's footage of the band's very first gig over fifteen years ago, which is obviously gritty and raw, and you get to see them rehearsing in their freezing garage, all bundled up against the elements. If you're already a fan, this will be a real treat; if you're not, this probably won't convert you overnight, and you'd be better off picking up their 'Bitterness The Star' CD. **Ian Glasper**

Aquarion 3 & 4 (Manga) DVD

Pretentious wank dressed up as fleeting nudity and light glares. Managed to make giant super robots fighting each other seem mundane after the umpteenth romantic emotional aside (my pet Anime hate). Bored me to sleep. **Alex**

Bitch Slap (Momentum Pictures) DVD

Bitch Slap is essentially a super slick and beautifully trashy B-Movie done with a great appreciation of Russ Meyer's 'Supervixens', Tarantino's 'Kill Bill' and Robert Rodriguez's adaptation of 'Sin City'. The acting, dialogue and plot are all pretty fucking terrible but that's the whole point, these things would only serve in being counter-productive to the basic premise of this film... i.e. Hot chicks dressed in skimpy outfits, showing loads of cleavage, fighting and dry humping each other in the desert. I'd seen the trailer for this film previously and thought it looked fucking stupid... so naturally when the quarterly MM list came out I put my name straight down to review it! I expected this film to be pure shite but I was pleasantly surprised to find myself chuckling away within the first 15 minutes. I also anticipated feeling ashamed if anyone walked in to catch me watching it... "What's this on the TV?"... "oh... just Bitch Slap." But neither of these things could be further from the truth, Bitch Slap, despite its inevitable pitfalls, is highly entertaining, expertly made and above all a fun film to watch alone or with friends. If you disapprove of unnecessarily gratuitous cleavage shots and crass dialogue I can guarantee that you will hate this film, however if you like I enjoy this type of moronic bullshit expect to be rewarded with some classic B-Movie gold. It might begin to test your patience at a hefty 100 minutes but there are times here where you just don't want the stupidity to end! Definitely worth checking out, especially if you're a fan of Russ Meyer's exploitation flicks or films like 'Planet Terror', 'Deathproof', 'Kill Bill' I & II, 'Ichi The Killer'. **Ioan**

Backwoods Bloodbath (Donn Kennedy, MVM 2007) DVD

I blame Sam Raimi. He was the one who ably demonstrated that you could kick-start a major Hollywood career by taking a bunch of kids, sticking them in the woods and attacking them with a hideous creature who only wants to see them suffer. Donn Kennedy wasn't even born when 'The Evil Dead' was made, but he tries to plough the same path with 'Backwards Bloodbath', except this time it's the poor viewers who end up suffering. Look, I know that nobody sets out to deliberately make a bad film, but... fuck me, man! Did you *really* put this much effort into making such a stinker? Granted, you hit upon a half-decent villain for your tale - that of the Black Hodag, a legendary beast said to haunt the northern woods of Wisconsin - but then you made him into a dreadlocked slasher wearing a flasher mac and a pair of welder's goggles. Yes, this is exactly what you would expect a supernatural creature that has been living in a wood for over a century to look like. Then you gathered the blandest bunch of non-actors you could find, put them in a rented house and instructed them to discuss their boring relationships and have extremely unconvincing sex with each other every five minutes, because, y'know, that's exactly what you would

FILM AND DVD REVIEWS

do when being stalked by a dreadlocked slasher in a flasher mac. Then you crammed the film with ludicrous editing - I'm thinking specifically about the pre-sex fade-out followed by an extreme close-up of a tit that fills the entire screen - piss-poor lighting, bad audio and the worst excuse for fake blood I have ever seen. What did you use, red milk? Granted, I may have got an unintentional laugh out of the scene where the homely farm girl strips off in her daddy's barn to reveal lingerie straight out of 'Sex And The City', but where I come from, billing such a shitty movie as a 'return to the non-PC horrors of the '80s' can earn you a beating. You owe me ninety minutes of my life back. **Liam Ronan**

Bleach: Series 4 - Part 2 (Manga) DVD

Fantastical animated series based on the comic series of the same name. It could, in a nutshell be summed up as a darker, more grown up version of Pokemon. Clearly aimed at the teenage market Bleach is a glossy, visually pleasing action packed drama. The story follows the secret supernatural world of the Soul Reapers and other fantastically over the top characterizations of good and evil forces. The narrative focuses on a teenage boy named Ichigo who accidentally absorbs the power of a Soul Reaper after she's wounded trying to protect him from an evil spirit... If this is already starting to sound a bit repulsive for some of you let me half heartedly reassure you that Bleach due to it's slightly more grown up nature is a hell of a lot more engaging than a lot of 'other' anime out there... despite being relatively safe violence / action wise the animation is really nicely done and the direction pretty coherent. I haven't seen any of the previous entries in this series so naturally it's difficult for me to put these episodes into a proper context but I'm pretty sure if I was a bit younger I'd be pretty keen on these! **Ioan**

Borderland (Zev Berman, Momentum 2007) DVD

Director Zev Berman was inspired to create the brutal 'Borderland' after blundering into the sidelines of the real-life 1989 investigation into the Matamoros cult murders while on a student trip with some buddies. The Mexican police who stopped his van were genuinely scared that the bizarre curios the friends had collected as souvenirs of their trip were some kind of evidence of satanic worship, and the experience kick-started Berman's obsession with the case. Crafted with genuine care and sincerity, the scares of 'Borderland' are anything but superficial, and the opening ten minutes raise the definition of hard-to-watch as two Mexican police officers cautiously search a house and discover charred jawbones in the fireplace and blood-drenched statues draped with real human hair. Taken prisoner by the occupants, one of the cops, Ulysses, is forced to observe while his comrade is tied to a chair and has his right arm sawn off at the elbow (for starters). Determined not to die on his knees, Ulysses' tries to respond to his friend's pitiful whimpers, but he is shot and left for dead by the strangely dispassionate killers. Flash forward one year as three Texas University buddies join hundreds of their peers in celebrating Spring Break with a trip across the border to Matamoros, a Shangri La destination for American teenagers hungry for cheap alcohol, drugs and sex. While visiting one of the carnivals that travel up and down the borderland, the friends become separated, and one is bundled into a car, driven to a remote ranch and chained up in a shack with only Sean 'The Goonies' Astin for deranged company (this is probably the only film where you'll ever hear a former Hobbit use the word 'cunt', by the way). As his friends search for him, the kid discovers that he is due to be sacrificed by a drug cartel that uses black magic rituals to protect their transactions and activities - rituals that require numerous body parts and extreme suffering for maximum potency. With the Mexican police force running scared of the cult and the only person willing to help left with a severed goat's head in place of her own decapitated bonce, the two remaining friends are all set to abandon their buddy and get the hell out of Mexico, but the intervention of a severely maimed Ulysses changes everything... I know it sounds hokey, but the cult, its beliefs and the jaw-dropping atrocities they carry out are all based on what actually occurred. 'Borderland' is a great horror thriller, but what really caps this disc off is the inclusion of 'Rituales De Sangre: The True Story Behind The Matamoros Cult Killings', a documentary that features crime scene footage of the cult members calmly and patiently talking to police officers

about their activities. The most chilling aspect comes when the police ask a cult member who has confessed to kidnapping and killing an American tourist where he has buried the body, and he replies ‘Which one?’ – a comment which eventually led to the remains of more than 40 victims being recovered from the cult’s ranch house base. ‘Borderland’ is sobering stuff, and Berman treats the subject matter with respect and tact even while sharing in its awful jaw-dropping horrors. **Liam Ronan**



Chimera (1991/2010, Lawrence Gordon Clark, Revelation) Released 5th July on DVD

Can it really be almost 20 years since I sat down and watched this mini-series on ITV? Receiving an unprecedented amount of press coverage at the time – mainly because of the ethical issues it raised – Stephen Gallagher’s story of genetic manipulation actually took ten years to go from book to screen, eventually finding its way there through a series of happy accidents (like the TV company looking for a last minute four hour drama because the one they were planning stalled). Thankfully it did get made, not only giving us this historical genre gem, but springboarding Gallagher into other high profile projects, such as Oktober – which he also directed – and the more recent American series of Eleventh Hour, Crusoe and The Forgotten. Here Lawrence Gordon Clark (Harry’s Game) takes the reins, using Gallagher’s script to his full advantage.

Taking a job as a nurse in a remote fertility clinic, Tracy Pickford (Emer Gillespie) begins to suspect that there’s more going on than meets the eye. Suspicious of Dr Jenner (David Calder) and his team, she aims to find out what exactly is being kept in the animal testing part of the hospital. But when tragedy strikes and something escapes, it’s down to erstwhile boyfriend and movie critic Peter Carson (John Lynch, emoting wonderfully) to investigate. What he uncovers is a web of intrigue, with scientist Alison Wells (Christine Kavanagh) and government official Hennessey (the always brilliant Kenneth Cranham) at its heart. The next thing he knows, he’s being drawn into the search for the thing known only as ‘Chimera’, taking its name from the legendary creature. But with the police being shut out and shady military guys on the prowl in the small rural location, will he be able to uncover the truth and find the beast before everything’s covered up for good?

Admittedly, Chimera is a product of its time – the late 80s haircuts, clothes and cars testify to that, but the sense of panic about scientific developments remains just as fresh today. It’s also an *early* slice of Gallagher, and he admits himself in the interview also included, that some scenes were padded and some lines of dialogue make him wince. However, as he also states, there’s some of his best work on display here – and who could fail to get emotionally involved in this timeless tale of Frankenstein proportions. The pacing could do with tightening up in places, but actually this only adds to the suspense of what’s going on. Image Animation’s creature effects also hold up well, making the Chad hybrid both frightening and sympathetic by turns. And I defy anyone not to get a shiver down the spine at the final scenes of the Chimera babies being farmed.

What’s also fun is spotting famous names *before* they were famous. Look out for a young Paul O’Grady as a sign language expert taking to chimps, Coronation Street’s Roy Cropper (David Neilson) as a disillusioned farmer, Rita, Sue and Bob Too!’s George Costigan as a DI dragged back from his holidays, complete with Hawaiian Shirt (“Who are you?” “Don Johnson!”), plus a host of other familiar faces. Informative extras include the aforementioned interview with Gallagher, behind the scenes video footage that he actually took himself (like a trip to IA’s Pinewood workshop to see the creature being made), the script for the original radio dramatisation and the press kit. All in all, a little slice of TV horror heaven. **Tim Mass Movement**

Day of the Dead (directed by George Romero; Arrow Films) Blu-ray

Widely regarded as the grittiest - and best - of Romero’s zombie movies, ‘Day Of The Dead’ has scrubbed up pretty well on Blu-ray. Considering it was filmed in 1985 and is primarily set in a dimly-lit cave, the blood - and there’s LOTS of it - runs very red, and all the intestines glisten and gleam quite sickeningly, as if they really were fresh from a still-steaming cadaver. FX maestro Tom Savini truly worked wonders with his meagre budget, and as well as skin-ripping, gut-munching, head-cleaving zombie mayhem, we also get some pretty shocking vivisection-inspired body horror in Doctor ‘Frankenstein’ Logan’s nightmarish laboratory, but surprisingly it’s the characters, not the gore, that drag the viewer through this charnel house of a cautionary tale. Of course, there’s the maniacal Captain Rhodes, who gets all the best lines in the movie, and really milks them too (‘They’re dead... they’re fucking dead!’, ‘You want me to salute that walking pile of pus? Salute my ass!’ and, of course, ‘Choke on ‘em! Choke on ‘em!’), but the star of the show is Bub, Logan’s star pupil amongst his rag-tag zombie test subjects, and

portrayed with such affecting subtlety he is far easier to empathise with than most of the scum-bag humans. Holed up in a cave, delaying the inevitable demise of Mankind one day at a time, they gradually turn on each other, their fragile ‘society’ descending into power-hungry madness, mistrust, racism, misogyny, grave-robbing and murder; it’s not an easy ride, and Romero leaves us in no uncertainty as to who the real monsters are in this picture. ‘Day...’ might not have been a huge hit at the box office upon its release, but was still a water-shed movie in the history of intelligent horror cinema; very different in scope and feel to its predecessor, ‘Dawn Of The Dead’, its claustrophobic atmosphere and the unflinching spotlight it shines on the dark side of

human nature make it just as intense and memorable. This most-welcome Blu ray edition comes with some great extras, especially the ‘Making Of’ documentary and a very in-depth interview with Joe ‘Captain Rhodes’ Pilato, and is even bundled up with an informative booklet about the political subtexts surrounding the film. What are you pus-fucks waiting for? **Ian Glasper**

Death Note Relight Volume 2 (Manga) DVD

What the hell just happened? What was that weird voodoo mask creature with black hair? Why is there a kid playing with a toy train in the middle of a Mexican stand off? Hell, I have no idea what just happened but I loved it. Death Note has a big cult following and for good reason, it’s a vivid, organically animated - and freaky- Anime, all based around a note book which if you write a name within it that person will die. A simple idea, set-up perfectly with battling factions; beautifully creepy, it crams in plot twists galore but still delivers with the right scares and mystery. Ticked all of my boxes, but as usual the thing I struggle with in Anime is melodrama (certain ‘dramatic’ parts of some anime films make me cringe till I cover my head with my jumper) this one trod a very fine line and almost kept it on the right side of serious but there are a couple of areas here where you might find your attention wandering as things get a little ‘too dramatic.’ I think that perhaps this is no fault of the original animated series more the English voice over dub added for the western market, which is what I foolishly watched it in. Try it with subtitles as this is potentially late night viewing heaven. **Alex**

Doctor Who: Creature From The Pit – Starring Tom Baker, Lalla Ward, David Brierly, Myra Frances, Eileen Way, Geoffrey Bayldon (BBC DVD / 2 Entertain) DVD

Everything has a formula. A special mixture of ingredients that, when combined in just the right way and the right amounts, result in an exquisite end product, and Doctor Who is no exception. The right amount of suspense, scares and thrills when mixed with a good story, eerie location, monsters and suitably nasty villain, are all the elements needed to deliver a classic Doctor Who story, and ‘Creature From The Pit’ has them in abundance. Answering a distress call, the Doctor, Romana and K-9 find themselves on Chloris, a jungle world (rich in vegetation, but decidedly short of minerals and metals), at the mercy of the Lady Adastr, who just so happens to own the only source of metal on the planet, a mine, in which dwells the ‘Creature’, to whom the Lady Adastr’s “enemies” (a broad and encompassing term used to describe anyone she feels like at any given time... They just don’t make crazy baddies like they used to) are “fed”. Chloris being a world short of metal isn’t exactly advanced, and the Lady Adastr has plans for the TARDIS, the Doctor and Romana. However, things aren’t quite as clear cut as they seem. Just what is the decorative shield hanging in Adastr’s palace? Is the Creature really native to Chloris, the only one of its kind? And does Adastr know more than she’s letting on? With Douglas Adams at the helm as script editor, and immediately following the hugely successful ‘City Of Death’ (which had the highest viewing figures of any classic Doctor Who story), ‘Creature From The Pit’ is a hugely entertaining science fiction romp, high adventure of the first order, not overly complicated, but not designed to appeal to simpletons either, it occupies the same ground as the fore mentioned ‘City Of Death’, and was (and is) a highlight of the seventeenth series, a story that’s as enjoyable today as it was when it was first broadcast.

All good then, yes? Well, no, not exactly - there are a few, shall we say, “uncomfortable” moments that pop up as the story unfolds. The bandit chief (Did I forget to mention the bandits? I did? Well, I’ve mentioned them now haven’t I?) being based on Fagin from ‘Oliver Twist’ for instance. A stereotype that always makes me squirm whenever it appears on, and in, any show or film, and one that I thought Douglas Adams would have been above using. Then there’s the creatures, uh, “appendage”, which looks, when seen through adult eyes, decidedly rude. I won’t go into the whole K-9 being voiced by David Brierly instead of John Leeson, in ‘Creature...’, as it’s a personal grip, and each to their own and all that. Ahem. Anyway, who cares? Minor gripes and niggles aside,

'Creature From The Pit' is a rollicking great adventure, a perfect slice of classic Doctor Who that's worth every penny and will be watched time and time again. Well, it will be by me....

Special Features: The usual commentary tracks, an Animal Magic special that was filmed on location that's fun if a little short, a interview with Christopher Barry who talks about his career as a director, a photo gallery, PDF materials and the always present coming soon trailer. **Tim Mass Movement**

Feast Trilogy (John Gulager, Optimum 2005-09) DVD

A bloodstained man runs into a shitkicker bar somewhere in Texas and warns the patrons that a gang of monsters are about to attack. They can either barricade the bar and fight back, or prepare to be dismembered and eaten. With the entire plot deftly laid out in the opening fifteen minutes, the remainder of 'Feast' sets about staging a rip-roaring, non-stop assault on good taste, public morals and standards of decency. It's almost the perfect punk rock horror film - anarchy reigns in every frame of this blood-soaked treat as typical movie conventions are turned on their head, torn apart and put back together without the use of a road map. Characters that you would normally expect to become the heroes either die a messy death or are revealed to be cowards and incompetent fools, and no one is safe, least of all elderly grandmas, cute children or innocent babies. The film is shot in a frantic, flashy style complete with introductory cards for each character detailing their name, what sort of person they are and their chances of making it to the final reel. The brilliantly realised monsters are chisel-toothed, razor-clawed and utterly disgusting. When they are not eating people, they are either rutting, sexually assaulting household pets or directing deadly projectile vomit through the air - one sorry bastard who doesn't get out of the way in time spends the rest of the film rotting on the bone and oozing pus and maggots. Henry Rollins provides the best laughs by playing against type as a lifestyle guru who can't stop spouting motivational crap even in the face of flesh-ripping doom, and genre stalwart Clu 'Return of the Living Dead, Hunter's Blood' Gulager delivers another great turn as a wiseass bartender. If the three films in the Feast series are viewed as a single movie, then the opening act is definitely the strongest. 'Feast II: Sloppy Seconds' extends the mayhem to a nearby town as a biker chick arrives looking for revenge on whoever killed her sister in the first film. Finding the bartender in the ruins, she tortures him for information, ties him to her bike and heads into town. Big mistake - the monsters have already torn the place apart, and pretty soon the pair are forced to join a small gang of survivors (whose members include a car salesman, his adulterous wife, her lover and a couple of wrestling midgets) in fighting for their lives and trying to figure out what the hell is going on. By now the viewer is doing exactly the same thing, but 'Feast III: The Happy Finish' isn't about to oblige with any answers or logical plot developments. If anything, the final installment is even crazier than what has gone before, and follows what is left of the survivors as they flee the monsters and search for a way out of the town. The standout scene has a character treating an injured colleague's wounds with tricks learned not at medical school, but by repeated viewings of Rambo III (let's just say that the movie lied to us). I won't spoil the ending of the trilogy, but you can be sure that it (a) leaves the way open for a fourth installment in the Feast franchise, and (b) you really, *really* won't see it coming. **Liam Ronan**

Geisha Assassin (directed by Go Ohara; MVM) DVD

There are an awful lot of bad martial arts flicks out there... and unfortunately here's one more. The hysterical press release compares 'Geisha Assassin' (originally entitled 'Geisha versus Ninja') to 'Kill Bill' and 'House Of 1000 Daggers', but to mention this in the same breath as those modern-day classics is like comparing Easyjet to British Airways... the basic principles are the same, but the execution is drastically different... i.e. a lot cheaper and lot less enjoyable! The 'Geisha' in question is Kotono, who was unlucky enough to have a Samurai for a father, so when she wanted to play with dolls he was handing her nunchucks. Of course, he gets killed, she grows up a trained killer and vows vengeance on those responsible, and has to fight her way past half a dozen of her father's ex-pupils to despatch his killer. So far, so good, 'cos let's face it, who gives a shit what the storyline is as long as there's some incredible sword play and geysers of arterial blood, right? Wrong! The action sequences here are just dull, and nowhere near sharp enough or brutal enough. If you like watching ninjas fly awkwardly through the air on wires, women running through woods twirling lethal umbrellas, and silly-looking monks stomping angrily about in sandals, complete with amateurish camera angles and a truly horrible soundtrack, go ahead, knock yourself out, but if you like your martial arts *gritty* - as opposed to *arty* - move along, there's nothing of value to see here. **Ian Glasper**



iMurders (Anchor Bay Entertainment) DVD

As you might be able to guess from the not so groundbreaking or original title, iMurders follows a group of social networking junkies who one by one, much to the viewers pleasure are brutally murdered by an unknown assailant. The budget looks half decent and the cast including veteran actor William Forsythe (Devils Rejects) is pretty respectable. More of a murder mystery than a horror, iMurders is a bloated 'who done it' thriller which inevitably pans out as a repulsing mix between 'Diagnosis Murder' and the OTT 'Saw' movies... of which I can't say I'm a fan! The main problem with this movie is that it's overly complicated and incredibly hammy... I mean FaceSpace... what the fuck? Not only do I want these people to die I want them all to die within the first 20 minutes! OK so I'm being unnecessarily critical of what was clearly an ambitious project for co-writer and director Robbie Bryan... it does look pretty good but the grim reality is, it's just not that great a movie. I mean is it me, or does the idea of watching a film where the key narrative structure is surveying 2 dimensional characters instant message each other pretty fucking depressing?! According to the tag line "No one is safe in cyberspace"... nice... that might work on grandma or for scaring little kids but like this movie very difficult to swallow if you live in the real world! **Ioan**

I Need That Record!: The Death (Or Possible Survival) Of The Independent Record Store (director: Brendan Toller; MVD Visual) DVD

I love music. I don't kind-of like music, don't enjoy music, don't have an interest in music. Music, for me, equals life. Period. I hate being out in public, can't stand being around people, would much, much, much rather be sitting at home with my headphones clamped over my ears... but I have relished every second of my life that was spent in a record store, and there have been many. Why was being 19 the best year of my life? Because that was the year I had the opportunity to manage an independent all-metal/hard rock record store in the sleepy community of Lawton, Oklahoma. How did I survive high school? Easy answer: the indie record shops that thrived in every Bahnhof (train station) in every small city in West Germany, where I lived at the time. How do I get the bulk of my music now? At a place that I consider to be the heart and soul of my current hometown of Austin, Texas—Encore Records on Anderson Lane. So when I found out about this independently produced documentary on the mass extermination of indie record stores across the USA, I had to watch it as soon as possible. In any documentary, the filmmaker will present the story in his own way, with his prejudices, his opinions, and a focus on subjects that he feels personally connected to. Brendan Toller - who is the sole writer, director, and editor of I Need That Record! - concentrates on a small area of the USA, spending most of the film shifting between Connecticut, Washington DC, and various parts of Ohio. The film follows the owners of a few different stores that had become institutions in their respective communities, chronicling each store's final days then catching up with the owners a few months later to see how their lives had changed. It also paints a broad-stroke portrait of the music industry, offering examples of possible culprits—such as the rise and fall of MTV, the rise and fall of Napster coupled with the rise and continuing rise both of iTunes and of music downloading in general, and the manner in which corporate greed has corrupted major record labels and all commercial radio stations over the years - without actually pointing a specific finger at any specific target. Anyone who has spent time in an indie record store will enjoy the footage of the various store owners, because, let's face it, there's a certain type of person behind the counter at an indie record store, so we all have a feeling of instant comfort inside the walls of any and all such places. The celebrity interviews are well-chosen and well-placed, and this DVD is worth the cost just for the passionate insights provided by Ian MacKaye, Thurston Moore, Mike Watt, Legs McNeil, Lenny Kaye, Glenn Branca, Patterson Hood, Pat Carney (Black Keys), BP Helium (Of Montreal), and—interestingly, in a very, very good way—Noam Chomsky. The film runs a little under half an hour, but the DVD is packed with well over 2 hours of extras, including full interviews with those listed above. If you have ever "needed" a record, you need to own a copy of this film. **The Impaler**

Long Weekend (Jamie Blanks, Showbox 2008) DVD

The original 1978 'Long Weekend' is a classic of Australian cinema, a real nerve-shredder that stands head and shoulders above most other entries in the nature-strikes-back sub-genre. What we have here is an acceptable but basically pointless remake written by the original's screenwriter, the great Everett 'Razorback, Road Games' De Roche, and directed by Jamie Blanks of

'Urban Legend' fame. The story is exactly the same, with only slight alterations to differentiate between the two versions: rich city slickers set off for a camping weekend on a deserted beach and spend their time either bickering or defiling their environment. Whether they are pouring bug spray onto ant hills, smashing an eagle's egg, chopping down trees for no reason, hitting a kangaroo with their jeep or carelessly starting a bush fire with a discarded cigarette, this odious pair treat nature with as much disdain as they have for each other. Played in the remake by Jim Caviezel and Claudia Karvan, it quickly becomes obvious that the trip has been organised to give them a chance to dust off a number of skeletons lurking in the background of their relationship, but the cracks start to show just as nature turns against the invaders. Are they going insane, or are the animals and fauna really out to get them? What is that dark shadow lurking beneath the surf, and what has happened to the family in the camper van over in the next bay? Slick, fast and always gorgeous to look at, 'Long Weekend' is a painless rehash of a film that didn't need tinkering with, but anyone who hasn't already seen the original is going to have a great time with this faster-paced update. **Liam Ronan**



Rain Fall (Momentum Pictures) DVD

Rain Fall; a Japanese action thriller co-starring none other than Gary Oldman is a bit of an oddity if you ask me... the plot is not dissimilar to the Bourne Ultimatum (be that on a shit load of downers). Based on the novels of ex CIA man Barry Eisler 'Rain Fall' centers on the fictional exploits of

super slick Japanese/ American soldier turned contract killer John Rain. Theoretically and on paper this all sounds good but in reality it's just a bit boring... sure there are a few fancy elaborate kills, some lush cinematography and a sat-ifying overall polish yet there's only so much jabbering about some missing USB pen drive that a man can take. Not a bad movie on the whole especially considering it's modest budget however I did find myself at several points throughout this film wishing that something or someone would blow up soon! One scene in particular made me chuckle, whilst at a Judo dojo we see several black belts training. It's quite obvious that these apparent 'black belts' can't fight for shit, struggling to do even the simplest of moves! It might not have been a pivotal scene in the movie but considering its an 'action' film there's clearly a lot missing. **Ioan**

Naruto: Series 8, Part 2 Manga) DVD

After a ludicrously stupid rock-intro with over the top action silliness (including flashbacks to twenty seconds into the future and the past – no comment) and bizarre wooden training dolls come to life another series of Naruto begins. Young ninja and his friends blah blah blah fighting blah blah ancient scrolls blah blah, you know the drill. Although keen to not take itself too seriously and proud of it –its main audience is teen orientated- this anime is quite unsure of how to hold its audiences attention, whether to be overly serious or to be a jovial Dragonball like affair. It's this constraint I think which hold the series back, unable to break bones it contents itself with puffs of smokes, comedy 'twang' noises and heavy ground smacks which don't impart a sense of danger to all these seemingly indestructible main characters but when combined with it's bizarrely overacted voiceover and references to fights and dead fathers from several series ago I found it strayed too close to melodrama and teen angst. Very inventive and simply animated for it's ideas to come to the fore it lacks a certain something to keep my interest and considering the awesome Bleach and the creepy as fuck Death Note (also in the review package this month) I know which series I'd rather indulge in watching. This isn't to say I didn't like Naruto on its own merits, it's enjoyable but I may have to come back to it at a later date. Definitely orientated towards its pre-existing fanbase as opposed to newcomers. **Alex**

Princess Of Persia – Starring Tiffany Dupont, Luke Goss, James Callis, John Rhys-Davies, Omar Sharif, John Noble (Revolver) DVD

What was it that John Lydon asked the audience of the Winterland Ballroom on the final date of the Sex Pistols US tour? Something along the lines of "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?" Right now, I can sort of relate to that statement, as I'm willing to bet, the cast of 'One Night With The King' could. See, 'Princess Of Persia' is 'One Night With The King', re-branded for release on DVD, and if I was a cynical man, I'd also point out that the re-branding and release of 'Princess...' has been timed to coincide with the release of 'Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time', the latest Jerry Bruckheimer Summer blockbuster that'll be as vacuous and empty as an average evening spent watching Challenge TV but as entertaining as a Flash Gordon marathon. Shameless marketing ploy or coincidence? I'll leave that decision up to you. It's a damn shame though, as 'One Night With The King' is pretty entertaining, and should have been left to stand on it's merits, as it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Hollywood no-brainer that its new name has bound it to. After all, one's based on a videogame, and one's based on the Biblical Story of Esther, the peasant girl who married a king and saved her people from genocide. Okay, so 'Princess Of Persia' (as it's now known), isn't ever going to feature in any serious movie critics top ten, but it is pretty good fun in that Hallmark Sunday afternoon way, the cast isn't too bad (James 'Boltar' Callis is bloody brilliant and steals the show, but I'm beginning to suspect he does the same in everything he features in), and it's a pleasant mix of love story, revenge, salvation, redemption and court and political intrigue, and lets face it, any Bible story that can entertain a staunch Humanist (that would be me), has to have something right? Indeed, and I suspect that 'Princess Of Persia', new title or not, is at least as entertaining, if not more so, than its big budget marketing buddy. A tenner splashed on 'Princess...', bottle of wine and an evening in with your other half, or a trip to a cinema filled with loud-mouthed Chavs who can barely read the titles, let alone understand the concept of shutting up and letting everyone else enjoy the film that they've paid money to see. I know which I'd rather...Where's that

Romeo And Juliet - Vol 1 (MVM) DVD

In Neo-Verona the wicked and cruel Lord Montague reins, having usurped power from the more altruistic Capulets. Romeo neither approves nor supports his father in his actions and Juliet not only masquerades as a boy for the first few episodes but also has an alter-ego, the Red Whirlwind, who is the town's do-gooder, protecting innocents from Lord Montague's foul play (like a female Robin Hood). None of this is strictly true of the original Shakespeare story from which this is adapted but that is what makes this anime so good. That and the fact that the protagonist Juliet is portrayed as a smart, strong-willed character with good moral coding, which certainly makes a change from the typical portrayal of cute, ditsy girls (I recall Cutie Honey as one example of this in its most irritating form) With so many existing adaptations of the original, it is refreshing to see this unique and more post-modern take on the plot still managing to effectively borrow lines from the play, as well as featuring whole episodes spoken in Shakespearean dialect and even featuring Shakespeare as a character. Where this series really succeeds is by avoiding becoming *just* an anime version of an existing story, instead it really comes into its own. Moreover the anime is beautifully constructed with some sumptuous shots of the Neo-Verona (such as the castle gardens and canals) also in the characters. Whilst some fans will probably criticise it for taking itself seriously and lacking in the usual anime flair and fireworks display of action – it is the construction of a thoughtful drama breathing new life into the genre which really sets this apart and makes it one of the best anime series of recent time. **Lauren Barley**

Salvage (Lawrence Gough, Revolver 2009)

Set in a suburban neighbourhood somewhere in the Wirral, the entire plot of this British horror/action flick involves an estranged mother trying to get across the street and into a house where her daughter has been trapped after a special forces squad seals off the quiet cul de sac and orders everyone to stay indoors. With no explanations as to why they are being threatened with summary execution by men in balaclavas, the horrified residents are left to come up with their own ideas. Having already witnessed the killing of a Muslim neighbour, some believe that they are in the middle of a terrorist attack, but as the viewers have already seen the pre-credits slaying of a paperboy in the nearby woods, we suspect that the soldiers are hunting something else entirely – something linked to television news reports of a beached cargo container... A clever play on the events of recent years where hundreds of people have rushed to scavenge for washed-up goods, 'Salvage' scores highly on all fronts – it's well-made, features some convincing acting and sneaks a few surprises in along the way that you don't see coming. The all-important suburban setting is highly realistic as the film was shot on sets leftover from the defunct soap opera 'Brookside', but there are a few questionable plot points –the supposedly elite squad hunt their prey at night using flashlights instead of night-vision equipment, and one resident gets into his neighbour's house by knocking down the plasterboard walls in the attic – but maybe we can pin that one on the cheapskate builders who wanted to save on bricks. 'Salvage' is well worth getting hold of, even if it does lift its ending from George A.

Romero, and I for one will be interested to see what Gough can do with his forthcoming film, 'The Drought'. **Liam Ronan**

Sherlock Hound: Complete Series (Manga) DVD

Mid 1980's Japanese Anime series based on the adventures of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, there is one slight difference however... yep you guessed it... all the characters are depicted as anthropomorphic dogs. Ok so it might not have much in common with the original Arthur Conan Doyle's stories but it does serve to be a pretty nifty excuse for some fast-paced, slapstick comedy all beautifully hand drawn and generously animated. Car chases, boat chases, balloon chases you name it they're all here, not forgetting the intermittent, rather brown looking explosions and the pretty amusing stereotypical British accents where everyone is either speaking the Queens English or in a mock-cockney twang. Although clearly aimed at children there's enough cheeky playfulness and Jules Verne style steam-punk technology on show here to keep the even the grumpiest of grown ups happy (for about 20 minutes at least)! Contained in this box set are all 26 episodes... that's a hell of a lot of Sherlock Hound! Worth checking out if your a fan or have money to burn! **Ioan**

Sinking Of Japan – (directed by Shinji Higuchi; MVM) DVD

Like so many blockbuster disaster movies, there is real science embedded into the plot in order to make it plausible and ultimately affecting on the audience. In the Sinking of Japan we see the results of the country being geographically positioned on a destructive plate boundary, which means that when two tectonic plates collide (Phillipine and Euroasia) Japan will subside. Shinji Higuchi's 2006 film, finally seeing the light of day in the UK, was based on the disaster novel by Sakyō Komatsu which is in turn based on the events of the Osaka-Kobe quake of 1995, a poignant event in Japanese history. In the plot, the gradual sinking of Japan causes a series of disasters, with tidal waves and earthquakes affecting all parts of the country. Meanwhile the government is trying to stop further calamity by carefully plotting to detonate explosives at the Earth's core to put a stop to the overlapping (subduction) of the tectonic plates once and for all. The film strikes the perfect balance between developing a human interest plotline (focusing on three characters and their part in the disaster) and high octane action. The special effects are really well done without taking over and reducing the film to a mere fireworks display like the recent big Hollywood blockbuster *2012*. Could this be the perfect example of a Japanese director taking the formula of oh so many big budget American movies and creating something better, thus positioning Japan as prime competitors in this field? I think so. **Lauren Barley**

Stargate Universe (2010, 20th Century Fox) Released 5th July on DVD, £49.99.

This third TV spin-off from the successful 1994 movie changes the formula quite a bit, mixing things up and dividing the loyal fan base considerably. Those who loved the tongue in cheek interaction of the main cast, whether it be in **SG:1** or **Atlantis**, will find nothing of the kind here. Instead, there's gritty realism and political tension – pretty much what you'd expect in a post-**Galactica** era. But where **Galactica** didn't seem to pause for breath all that often, the vast majority of **SGU**'s first season moves at a snail's pace. And while that does give us a chance to get to know all the characters very well indeed (credit due here to the actors assembled, not one of which give a duff turn), it does mean you have to stick with the show in order to get the full benefit when everything kicks into faster than light speed later on.

The pilot, 'Air', split into three parts, gets us straight into the action – as the Icarus Base is attacked, forcing a ragtag team of civilians and military personnel to launch through the Stargate – after the mysterious ninth chevron has been activated – and into unknown territory. Where they end up is The Destiny, an ancient spacecraft at the other end of the universe. Conflicts soon begin to appear, especially between Col. Everett Young (Louis Ferreira) and Dr Nicholas Rush (Robert Carlyle), both vying for the right to lead the group – with characters like Eli Wallace (David Blue), Camile Wray (**E.R**'s Ming - Na) and T.J (Alaina Huffman) constantly in the middle of their tug of war. The majority of episodes that follow, however, concentrate on survival: finding either water, or food, or sustaining the oxygen levels. This means quick trips to planets through the Stargate on the ship, but throwing in a ticking clock as teams must get back before Destiny makes its jumps through hyperspace. In fact, one of the most exciting arcs of the first season (followed through the episodes 'Human', 'Lost'



and 'Sabotage') deals with exactly that: what happens when crew members get left behind?

There are a fair few character-centric episodes, as well. For example, we find out more about First Lieutenant Matthew Scott's (Brian J. Smith) religious background in part three of 'Air', Sergeant Greer (Jamil Walker Smith) and Chloe Armstrong's (Elyse Levesque) contrasting relationships with their fathers are tackled via hallucinations in 'Pain', and we get insight into the marriages of both Young and Rush – the former using the 'communication stones' device (allowing people from the Destiny to switch bodies with folk back on Earth), the latter when Rush's mind is hooked up to the ship itself. But there *are* some action episodes

scattered between, for example 'Time' allows the writers to mess with the time-lines and add some creepy 'aliens in the shadows' at the same time, while 'Space' sees Rush and Chloe kidnapped by more intelligent E.T.s, bent on taking Destiny for themselves.

It isn't really until the end of the first series, however, that **SGU** begins to show us its true potential – with the cracking episodes 'Subversion' and two-part finale 'Incursion'. These reintroduce the Lucian Alliance, who manage to sneak aboard Destiny and take hostages. The last few minutes of the season are guaranteed to leave you gasping for more.

In spite of the cameos by former **SG** actors, like Amanda Tapping (as Carter), Michael Shanks (as Daniel Jackson) and Richard Dean Anderson (as O'Neill, now in charge of **SG** operations), this is definitely not the **Stargate** you've come to know over almost twenty years. Whether that's good or bad is subjective, but at the very least **SGU** has provided an excellent jumping off point for season two. The wealth of extras in this box set include commentaries, video diaries and interviews. **Tim Mass Movement**

Street Trash (directed by Jim Muro; Arrow Films) DVD

You know what? Getting 'Day Of The Dead' to review this month fucked it up big-time for 'Street Trash' because, although both were spawned in the same gene pool of Eighties grue and gore, Romero's bastard offspring grew up deserving of its status as a genuine 'cult classic', whilst Jim Muro's de-ranked little puppy is like the poor inbred relative that everyone wants to disown. The desperately earnest critic might flail about trying to find the Vietnam allegories, and ponder long and hard that 'Street Trash' highlights how cheaply mainstream society regards the homeless, but I personally can't be arsed, because it's a film about tramps drinking toxic waste - then melting. And that's it! If cheap 'n' cheerful gore, bad dialogue, atrocious acting, and some fairly sleazy exploitation cinema (gang rape and necrophilia, anyone?) still pushes all the right buttons for you, 'Street Trash' may not have actually aged that badly. There are some fairly hilarious death scenes (mainly of the exploding, bloated body variety, although there's a decapitation by compressed air cylinder that always raises a smile, and an impromptu game of catch with a dismembered penis), but no matter how fondly you remember this from your youth (it's also strangely reminiscent of watching a flagon of homebrew being passed around a Deviated Instinct show...!), the truth of the matter is, when push comes to shove, it's a little bit shit really. **Ian Glasper**

Suicidal Tendencies – Live At Olympic Auditorium (Suicidal Records) DVD

Recorded in 2005 this great live DVD finally sees the light of day. Much of that probably has to do with Mike Muir's back problems which made sure that his band kept a low profile for a couple years and, and ended up shelving this DVD until now. However, 2010 will be the year that marks the glorious return of ST. Several tours, a new album in September and this DVD. What we get here is the final punk rock show ever at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, where the band last played in 1985 before being banned from LA. It is a return to the band's stamping ground, the sort of show you dream about. First song 'I Shot Reagan' doesn't really show the energy that any Suicidal gig has, but from 'War Inside My Head' toward the amazing 'Pledge Your Allegiance' it's the rollercoaster we'd expect it to be. As they're not about the biggest band in the world both audio and video aren't top of the agenda, but unlike more technical bands that doesn't matter. This is hardcore to the bone, and with a guy as outspoken and intelligent as Muir fronting the band, you're just stuck to the screen. I loved every minute of it, and I'm sure all you cyco's out there will as well. **Martijn Welzen**

Superjail (The Complete Series) - David Wain, Teddy Cohn, Christy Karacas (Revolver) DVD

Wow. I feel like I've spaced out on really bad acid and trapped in hallucinogenic hell for the last two hours, and even though the "trip" was sort of bad, and a little out there, it was also kind of fun. Demented, bizarre and perverted, but fun nonetheless. 'Superjail' is a head on collision be-

tween 'Oz', 'Beavis And Butthead', 'The Phantom Toll-booth', 'The Freak Brothers' and 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' as directed by Terry Gilliam, satisfying a strange compulsion to bury himself in extreme ultra-violence and gore. 'Green River Rising' meets Roald Dahl pumped full of mescaline. I'd like to say it's odd, but that doesn't even begin to cover a show in which the warden comes across like a meth-crazed 'Willy Wonka', the head guard is the scariest (and biggest) bodybuilding low-rent nymphomaniac I've ever seen (so that would be out of the five I've seen, and one I've actually known. Ahem...), the head accountant is usually the wardens fool or 'bitch' (depending on your point of view) and in every single episode lots of prisoners (and other folks) die in horrible, nasty ways. It's absolutely insane, twisted, a little psychotic and thoroughly addictive; it's madness hooking me in halfway through the first episode. But, be warned 'Superjail' is high on Marmite-o-meter. You're either going to love it or hate it, there's no middle-ground and if you don't like "weird", you'd best leave well alone. One thing is absolutely certain, once you've seen it, you'll never forget it... **Tim Mass Movement**



Terror at the Opera (Arrow Video) DVD

Dario Argento's critically acclaimed and brutally visceral 'Terror at the Opera' should need no introduction to fans of the Italian directors back catalogue but for those of you who don't here it is... Betty an inexperienced opera singer literally gets her big break starring in a production of Verdi's 'Macbeth' when the bitter and twisted leading lady breaks her leg in a road accident. Betty wins the acclaim of both critics and audiences alike... what could possibly go wrong you say? A psychopathic 'fan' could suddenly start kidnap you, tie you up, taping needles to your eyelids and force you to watch in full view as he hacks your friends, lovers and co-workers into little bitty pieces. The action is both sickeningly unapologetic and brutally graphic, furthermore Argento plays with your mind in classic form introducing at the moment of climatic horror contemporary Heavy Metal music. Dario Argento is no stranger to using music this way and was a big influence on the soundtrack for George Romero's Dawn of the Dead, not the library / mall music but the use of synth heavy prog rock band 'Goblin'. I'm getting side tracked... Basically if you like the 'Phantom of the Opera' story and enjoy suspense / thriller / horror films not forgetting your occasional (clever) slasher movie then this is the movie for you. An excellent edition to any DVD collection 'Terror at the Opera' is a bit like 'Phantom...' only directed by a twisted Italian Alfred Hitchcock! I chose to watch it with the original Italian dub with subtitles because I wanted to hear it as it was meant to be heard. Also included is the infamous Cannes dub (when it was first screened at Cannes with the English dub it was apparently laughed off screen) and a later Dario Argento approved dub. Just a heads up on that one! **Ioan**

The Children (Tom Shankland, Optimum 2008) DVD

A snow-swept country retreat becomes an isolated battleground as the young take on the old in 'The Children', a film that has won a lot of critical praise while managing to escape criticism for ripping off its entire concept and inspiration from the little-known superior 1974 Spanish horror movie, 'Who Can Kill A Child?'. In both flicks, the younger members of a rural community inexplicably turn on the adults, slaughtering them in increasingly inventive ways. With 'The Children', the protagonists are two families who meet up at a luxurious house to celebrate Christmas together. While the adults sip wine and talk about their latest business ventures, the kids play games and rip open their presents. The only one not enjoying the festive fun is moody teenager Casey, a rebellious rock chick who spends most of her time moping around or trying to hide her belly tattoo of a monstrous baby. But when the children appear to fall victim to a mystery virus, Casey is the first to notice that the symptoms of the illness have potentially fatal consequences for anyone over the age of 12... 'The Children' sets out to be the ultimate parental paranoia flick, and for anyone who hasn't already seen 'Who Can Kill A Child?', it probably hits all the right buttons. The child actors are fantastic in their roles, and once the mood turns nasty, you have no problem believing that they are capable of sticking knives through people's eyes or inserting a baby doll into a slashed stomach in a perverse parody of birth. Despite not being as original as it appears, 'The Children' is still a solid well-crafted chiller that will have you yelling "Behind you!" more than once. **Liam Ronan**

The Graves (Brian Pulido, Anchor Bay 2009) DVD

For his first cinematic outing, the creator of the comics 'Evil Ernie' and

'Lady Death' opts for a desert survival horror story along the lines of 'The Hills Have Eyes' and 'Tourist Trap'. Two sisters who are into horrorcore music and underground comics take off for a last road trip before the elder sibling starts her new marketing job. Unable to resist the lure of a supposedly haunted old west silver mine, they stumble across a bizarre desert community who kill all newcomers as part of a soul harvest in honour of a supernatural deity they believe to be God. The sisters have to fight for their lives when the town blacksmith – the massive Shane Stevens, here looking like a dead ringer for Rob Zombie – tries to pummel them with a sledge hammer. The sisters succeed in killing him, only for his even sicker brother (Bill 'Choptop' Moseley) to arrive, don a plastic pig nose and hunt them down with a rusty sickle in scenes that reminded me of 'Switchblade Romance'. At first the sisters (and the viewers) think they have strayed into 'Texas Chain Saw Massacre' territory, but they discover that there is method to the town's madness, and the deity that the locals worship is about to make its presence known... 'The Graves' has three things going for it: superb location filming at a genuine old west ghost town, the always watchable Bill Moseley doing his mischievous psycho routine, and Tony 'Candyman' Todd as the raving, jiving, bouncing-on-his-toes preacher who leads the killer community. On the flip side, the film suffers from repetitive scenes of the sisters running from one hiding place to another, and after a while one desert wash looks pretty much the same as another. I'm also not sure that scenes demonstrating the feral state that the supernatural presence invokes in those who enter its presence fully work, but Pulido does a good job of making his two heroines believable and credible characters, and you genuinely care about what happens to them – no mean feat in any horror movie. 'The Graves' is a lot like the videos you used to hire when you were bunking off school – you're probably never going to watch it a second time, but it delivers the goods and offers plenty of simple, straightforward fun. A sequel is in the works, by the way. **Liam Ronan**

Valhalla Rising (Nicolas Winding Refn, Momentum 2009) DVD

From the acclaimed director of the 'Pusher' trilogy and 'Bronson' comes 'Valhalla Rising', an uber-violent tale about a party of doomed Vikings who have abandoned their pagan ways and have converted to Christianity. Filmed amid the mountains and lochs of Scotland, it tells the story of One-Eye, a mute slave who is forced by his masters to fight in vicious gladiatorial contests. Kept in a cage and constantly shackled, One-Eye's owners are a small band of Vikings who remain true to the old ways. Even though the slave is their most prized asset, they are all scared of the warrior's talent for inflicting vicious, horrible death on all who oppose him, and keep him under constant armed guard, even when he is let out to bathe in cold mountain streams. It is during one such trip that One-Eye discovers an arrow head submerged beneath the water, and this small tool proves to be all he needs to escape and slaughter his masters. Accompanied by a small boy – the only one to have shown him any kindness – One-Eye sets out on a journey of (gulp!) self-discovery. He meets and joins a band of Christian Vikings who plan to sail to the Holy Land to lend their services in the Crusades and reclaim Jerusalem in the name of God. Lost in a thick sea fog, weeks pass until they finally wash up on a strangely familiar shore... what we have here is possibly the world's first art-house movie about Vikings. Similar in tone to 'Aguirre, Wrath of God' and drenched in atmosphere and portentous imagery, it is a grim, dreary affair, laced with a thick sense of all-encompassing dread. So thick, in fact, you don't particularly care what happens to any of the characters, not even when they begin to meet increasingly bad ends. The director's commentary reveals that the tale is intended as a Christ parable with One-Eye cast as a man who escapes all that anchors him to the mortal world and eventually transcends his humanity to become a pagan god – although to be honest, this was completely lost on me. Maybe I've been watching too many horror films, but the one thing I did pick up on was that the director tries to invoke the look, feel and sound of 'Cannibal Holocaust' in several of the latter scenes. A long portion of running time is spent lost at sea in the fog, and just as the film seems about to get going again, it ends on a sour note. Never less than stunning to watch, 'Valhalla Rising' ultimately left me cold and depressed, but I think that maybe that was what the director was aiming for all along. **Liam Ronan**

Van Dieman's Land (Jonathan auf de Heide, High Fliers 2009) DVD

In the 1800s, Van Dieman's Land was the most feared and dreaded penal colony in the British Empire. Now known as Tasmania, back then it was a place where new arrivals were greeted by a sign at Macquarie Harbour that simply read 'Abandon all hope ye who enter here' – sound advice for anyone who sits down to watch this grim, unsettling film. It recreates the true story of eight convicts who attempted to escape by stealing a boat. An assorted

bunch of English, Scottish and Irish thieves, the escapees were led by Robert Greenhill, an accomplished sailor and navigator, but their bid was doomed when they failed to get the boat and were forced to turn inland instead. Lost in an inhospitable wilderness and unable to find food, the men began to turn on each other, eventually resorting to cannibalism in order to sustain themselves. The story became well known when Alexander Pearce emerged from the bush and confessed to having eaten his fellow convicts, but the authorities refused to believe him – at least until he made a second escape attempt and was caught with bits of his fellow escapees in his pockets! An appointment with the gallows soon followed... The film creates an astonishingly dark, brooding atmosphere as we follow the doomed men's struggle against hunger, exhaustion and a land which refuses to provide any sustenance. The attention to period detail is excellent, and the actors playing the convicts do so with conviction and no small amount of effort – they really did suffer for their art on this film, and it shows in every densely atmospheric frame. **Liam Ronan**



Welcome To The Jungle (Jonathan Hensleigh, Optimum 2007) DVD

No matter what the director may say on this disc's commentary, 'Welcome To The Jungle' is a micro-budgeted remake of Ruggero Deodato's 'Cannibal Holocaust'. That's both a boon and a curse, because while nothing will ever be able to match the soul-ripping experience of seeing that evil fucker in its uncut form, the much-borrowed premise still makes for addictive viewing - just ask the makers of 'The Blair Witch Project'. Not to be confused with a similarly titled adventure film starring The Rock, 'Welcome To The Jungle' begins with two couples who head into the wilds of New Guinea to search for an old white American man rumoured to be living with the natives, one who just might be Michael Rockefeller, the real life son of the future vice president of America who disappeared in 1961 while studying the remote Asmat tribe. Believing that a pilot acquaintance has provided them with a solid clue as to his possible whereabouts, the friends are soon following in Rockefeller's footsteps, and head deep into hostile territory where they generally arse about, insult a couple of missionaries, fight, get high, fight, argue, get drunk, fight, and so on, finally sealing their fate when they upset the locals by stealing relics from a tribal burial site. As the natives start to stalk them through the jungle, you just know that this one ain't going to have a happy ending... The gimmick here is that the two couples each have a camcorder, and the film consists of 'found' footage in a concept lifted wholesale from 'Cannibal Holocaust' and later copied in the likes of 'Cloverfield' and 'Paranormal Activity'. As the first couple fall prey to the vengeful natives, we view the rest of the film through the second couple's camera. This allows for a standout shock sequence where the surviving couple literally stumble upon what the natives have done to their friends – a seriously grim discovery that is undeniably effective despite being a direct (and inferior) steal from the most infamous atrocity that Deodato staged for 'Cannibal Holocaust'. For better or for worse, 'Welcome To The Jungle' keeps you watching to the bitter end, but I would have preferred to have seen a more original effort, especially as it was one of the last films that Gale Anne Hurd produced before her untimely death, and while interesting, it is still an unworthy swansong for her talents. **Liam Ronan**

WWE Wrestlemania 26 (WWE Home Video/Silverson) 3xDVD

Wrestlemania – in the words of WWE's advertising department it's the 'biggest event in sports-entertainment'. For wrestling nerds like me it has come to be the night you throw a 'Mania party, invite other nerds around and shout at the TV. It's the wrestling equivalent of the World Cup Final. Unfortunately, this year's 'Mania failed to live up to the hype. It was not bad by any stretch of the imagination, but at the same time it wasn't as incredible as 'the biggest night in sports-entertainment' should be. Some of the matches were disappointingly short; the tag team title match and CM Punk v Rey Mysterio come to mind

here. If given more time these could have been 4* matches. Other times bouts went on a tad too long – everyone knew that Bret Hart v Vince McMahon wasn't going to be a wrestling match. Bret Hart fans payed to see McMahon tap out to the sharpshooter in the centre of the ring, and although we did get to see this truly fantastic and historic 'Mania moment, it came after 13 minutes of tedious-ness. Bret should've slapped on the sharpshooter the first time that it was teased. The main reason above all to pick up this DVD set which, as with all WWE releases, looks fantastic, is the main event of the night – the Streak vs. Career match between two greats of the last two decades – Undertaker vs. Shawn Michaels. This match lived up to all expectations, and seeing these two put on such an incredible display was amazing. Watching live I was on the edge of my seat all the way through, and the end of the show brought a tear to the eye of any wrestling fan.

Other watchable, but not great matches on display include Edge v Chris Jericho, Sheamus v Triple H and John Cena vs. Batista (not as bad as you'd expect!). All in all this was probably a 6 or 7 out of 10 show (let's not mention the Divas match). On this edition you also get the entire 2010 Hall of Fame ceremony, with the likes of Ted Dibiase, Stu Hart, Antonio Inoki and Mad Dog Vachon being inducted. You also get selected matches from the Hall of Famers career. Definitely another WWE package worth being picked up. **Leigh**

X (Manga) DVD

This series is developed from the comic series X / 1999 from the almighty Clamp, a legend of Manga and this is the TV adaptation. Set at the end of the world with various superheros gathering to do battle enter stage left our hero; Kamui, trained to defeat the Seven Seals or 'Dragons of Heaven,' is about to kick as much ass as possible. Having never picked up the comic series I was as confused as the next person as to what on earth was going on but this series holds a lot of charm and is stunning visually and stylistically. I've heard that this betters the film adaptation, and having sampled this series I'm tempted to go back and buy the comic as this warrants more investigation! Like most series this is pretty inaccessible to the un-initiated to start with but after a few episodes you get an idea of what's about to kick off. Bad ass warriors, fights, swords, you know the deal and with a story by Clamp what more could you ask for? **Alex**

Zombeak (MVM) DVD

I won't lie to you watching Zombeak is about as rewarding as mashing two piles of shit together... It's cheap, badly constructed and above all absolutely fucking ridiculous. The audio sounds like it was recorded through the receiver of a telephone and it would seem the props department had to search for their budget behind the back of a sofa. Despite this Zombeak is almost bareable... In an "I can't believe this is so shit" kind of way. If you're curious about the basic plot... don't be... here it is all the same; after Satanists kidnap sharp-tongued waitress Melissa, it's not long before boyfriend Billy Ray and his masochistic cop brother set out to save her. The dodgy looking Goths with shitty eyeliner tattoos a.k.a the 'Satanists' attempt to summon the devil using Melissa as bait and a chicken as a sacrifice. When the hapless Billy Ray and his trigger-happy posse gatecrash the party the Devils spirit is inadvertently transferred into the chicken... you can only imagine what happens next... queue shitty fake chicken, bobbing up and down in front of the camera as fake blood is generously if unbelievably sprayed around the room. Easily one of the cruddiest films ever made it's by no means the worst I've seen. Don't get me wrong though... this is genuinely a bad movie and best avoided... unless however you've ever wondered what evil tastes like... because apparently it tastes exactly like chicken... **Ioan**

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SCREEN DAMAGE PRESENTS...

PHANTASM

The tall tales of PHANTASM

The late 1970s proved themselves to be hallmark years for American horror movies. It was a pre-home video golden age, a time when independently-made films could still be picked up for a long run around the country's cinemas, grindhouses and drive-in screens.

Nowhere was safe. Down at the mall, the zombies of George Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead' were taking consumerism to extreme measures. America's desert wastelands were revealed to be the exclusive domain of inbred cannibals and cross-dressing psychopaths in movies such as Wes Craven's 'The Hills Have Eyes' or Charles Band's bizarre 'Tourist Trap'. Ridley Scott's 'Alien' claimed the icy trucking lanes of deep space as the stalking ground for creatures with rapist tendencies and a knack for making an entrance. Back on Earth, the assault on small town America was led by the likes of John Carpenter's classic 'Halloween' and Don Coscarelli's magnificent 'Phantasm'. It seemed that horror had finally come home, and the fear flowed from the screen to mark the era as a truly unique period in the genre. But while 'Halloween' took childhood bogeyman stories and made them real within a cosy suburban neighbourhood setting, 'Phantasm' followed the path of a fever-dream.

'Phantasm' was Don Coscarelli's third movie. A 20 year old UCLA graduate, his previous work included 'Jim, The World's Greatest', a grim drama about an alcoholic father and his sons, and an excellent childhood rites-of-passage piece called 'Kenny and Company'. It was a Halloween night scare sequence in the latter film that convinced Coscarelli to try his hand at horror for his third outing. As he told the official 'Phantasm' website, : "When the monster jumped out of the darkness to scare the boys, the entire audience screamed. This was an exciting, new response... I determined that my next film would be loaded with shocks."

It was a logical step for the young director to take. According to an interview he gave to the Mopar Collectors Guide, as a child in the 1960s Coscarelli was often left with a babysitter whose lack of enthusiasm meant he had unlimited access to late night television horror shows. He called upon his memories of those happy nights when he set off to write the script for 'Phantasm' in solitude, hiring a mountain cabin for three weeks and letting the isolation feed into his work.

"The longer I stayed alone in that cabin, the stranger my concepts became," he said. "For instance, one night I finished a soda and accidentally punched my finger up through the bottom of the styrofoam cup. Watching this apparently severed finger wriggling in the bottom of my cup inspired me, and the result was a severed finger sequence in 'Phantasm'."

In the 1979 advertising manual for 'Phantasm' that distributor Avco Embassy sent out to exhibitors, Coscarelli said: "I've been a horror movie buff all my life. But the more horror I witnessed on screen, the more difficult it was to scare me.

"That became the challenge of 'Phantasm' - to create a nightmare that would shock even the most jaded members of the audience."

Of the film's title, Coscarelli struck on the word 'Phantasm' mainly because it suited the hallucinatory tone of the picture - one dictionary definition defines it as being 'the delusion of a disordered mind' - and also because it was a phrase frequently used by one of his favourite authors.

"Edgar Allan Poe loved the word," the director revealed at the 1988 premiere of 'Phantasm II'. "He used it all of the time in his work, and that's where we

stole it from."

Adopting an experimental, deliberately non-linear approach for the film, Coscarelli took great care to anchor his story in sleepy China Grove, an all-American town that could have come directly out of a Norman Rockwell painting - albeit one boasting a surreal streak worthy of Buñuel or Dali.

"Surrealism was always a component of Phantasm," Coscarelli confirmed in the Nucleus Films documentary, 'Phantasmagoria'. "I was heavily influenced by 'Un Chien Andalou'."

This and its small-town setting were both traits that 'Phantasm' shared with Willard Huyck's earlier, more self-conscious 'Messiah of Evil'. Both films succeeded in capturing the otherworldly feel of life in an insular community where things aren't quite what they seem.

"Coscarelli has rediscovered the surrealist cinema of the 1920s - the destruction of the story line, the surge of symbols emptied of content, the systematic refusal to make sense," the Chicago Tribune would later report.

An obsession with mortuaries and the way in which society deals with the deceased determined Coscarelli's setting and tone.

"The basic scenario of 'Phantasm' came from my fascination and revulsion with death and how it manifests itself here in America," Coscarelli told Rue Morgue magazine. "How the

corpse is spirited away behind closed doors by the mysterious, black-clad mortician to a place that we are not allowed to go... I knew the subject would make for a great horror movie."

Using threads of half-remembered nightmares, he began to weave a tale of ghastly goings-on at a small-town funeral parlour with thick strands of teenage angst, the fear of abandonment, musings on the inevitability of fate, the physical manifestations of bereavement fallout and the factory-like manner in which dead bodies are processed and interred. Using these themes as his parameters, Coscarelli applied the anything-goes anarchy of the dream state, and in doing so successfully captured the essence of a nightmare on film.

As 'Phantasm' was made independently with his father, investment counselor D.A. Coscarelli, acting as producer, and his friend and long term business associate, Paul Pepperman, serving as co-producer (and occasional stuntman), there were no studio constraints placed on the director's vision.

Coscarelli had the luxury of shooting and re-shooting material over the course of three years, and he used the time to try out many different plot developments, including at least five different finales, most of which featured difficult action setpieces or elaborate special effect sequences.

In all, 'Phantasm' had a budget of around \$300,000 dollars to play with, but Coscarelli and Pepperman stretched it by spending most of the week planning ahead and then filming almost exclusively over long weekends. Doing this meant that not only could they ensure a smooth shoot, they could also save money on the actual number of days they needed to hire their cameras for. For his cast, Coscarelli turned mainly to actors he was already familiar with. He had first noticed Angus Scrimm's ability at pulling facial expressions on the set of 'Jim, The World's Greatest.' Scrimm (aka Laurence Rory Guy) had also played the title role in the 1951 short 'Abraham Lincoln', had written a stageplay for Sam Peckinpah, depicted Elias Disney in 'Walt Disney: One Man's Dream' and had somehow found time to win a Grammy for his record liner notes, something which meant that he could later lay claim to having helped introduce America to The Beatles. Now Scrimm was to portray the



Tall Man, dark emissary of a deadly force. Using just an undertaker's suit, boots with lifts in the heel, lank, straight hair and a permanent scowl, Scrimm was transformed into something suitably cadaverous and menacing.

"On my first film, he was the most accomplished and mature actor I had ever worked with," Coscarelli told. "I was very intimidated by him, and felt that if given the proper role, he could make quite an imposing impression."

When informed by Pepperman at a screening of 'Kenny and Company' that the director had written a role for him as an alien, the cultured and gentlemanly Scrimm, who lists India's 'Apu' trilogy as his favourite film experience, immediately wanted to know what country his character was from – France, perhaps, or maybe England?

"He's not from another country," Pepperman replied. "He's from another world."

"It came as a complete surprise to me," Scrimm remarked to *Worlds of Horror* magazine. "(Coscarelli) pretty much tailored the role to what he thought I could do."

For the film's trio of heroes, Coscarelli cast Michael Baldwin and Reggie Bannister from 'Kenny And Company' as, um, Mike and Reggie. 'Kenny and Company' had already turned Baldwin into a teen movie star in Japan, where his character's sassy attitude and open disrespect for adults had struck a chord with young filmgoers.

"We took a promotional trip to Japan when I was in the eighth grade, after the film came out, and when we stepped off the plane it was just like the Beatles," he said. "It was awesome. We were chased down the street by 200 screaming Japanese girls and had to dive into a limousine to escape. And then, of course, they swarmed the car. It was great."

Bannister had also acted in 'Jim, The World's Greatest' alongside Gregory

Struggling to bear his coffin, his best friends Jody and Reggie can't believe that their buddy committed suicide.

"It's a hell of a way to end a trio."

Jody's thirteen year old brother Mike has been forbidden from attending the funeral, but he sneaks in anyway, riding a dirtbike across the graves with the supreme lack of respect that only a teenager can muster. Jody and Mike's parents are dead, and Mike is terrified that his older brother, who appears to work in the music industry, may also leave town. He follows him constantly, shadowing his every move. While secretly watching the funeral from a distance, Mike hears strange scurrying sounds in the shadows and glimpses small robed figures darting between the gravestones.

Meanwhile, inside Morningside, Jody is paying his respects to his parents when he also hears the scurrying sounds, this time seemingly coming from behind the vaults in the marble walls. He is about to investigate further when he is startled by a hand on his shoulder. Whirling, he stares up into the face of a towering, scowling undertaker, and the audience sees for the first time that it is the same grim-faced figure who killed Tommy.

"The funeral is about to begin.... sir!"

With its velvet curtains, stone columns and bas relief sculptures, viewers could be forgiven for thinking that 'Phantasm' was filmed at a real funeral parlour. But the large number of action set pieces and violent stunts they had planned convinced Coscarelli and Pepperman that this would be impossible. Instead, they hired unit production manager Robert Del Valle Jr to come up with a cheap alternative.

It was decided to film on two main locations in California's San Fernando Valley. A small warehouse in Chatsworth was rented for set construction, and a house was leased at Pacific Palisades to serve as a set for the brothers'



Harrison, Coscarelli's first choice for the role of Jody, Mike's older brother. When Harrison opted to play the lead in the short-lived television series 'Logan's Run' instead, the role went to actor and musician Bill Thornbury. With several other actors and actresses from his previous films playing supporting roles, the strange story of Morningside Mortuary was ready to unfold...

The film opens with the memorable sight of a couple having sex in an eerie cemetery. The boy is Tommy, a long-haired rocker in a denim jacket. The girl, a blonde beauty wearing a sleek lavender dress, is listed in the credits only as the Lady in Lavender.

"That was great, baby."

As Tommy lies back in satisfaction, the girl unexpectedly plunges a dagger through his chest. In a series of quick edits, the last thing Tommy sees before he dies is a close-up of the girl's face changing into that of a grim-faced older man.

The opening scenes are a statement of intent on the part of Coscarelli. He hooks the audience with a mix of sex, death and surrealism, and lets them know early on that this is the start of something new, something unlike anything else they have ever seen.

Tommy's funeral is held at Morningside Mausoleum, a local funeral parlour.

home and also as a production headquarters. Morningside itself was designed and built by Mark Scott Annerl and Marc Schwartz, two graduates who had just spent a summer working in construction. It was a masterpiece of movie manipulation – a single huge hallway incorporating two side corridors at a centre intersection and an eight-sided rotunda at one end. This allowed for a variety of different camera angles to make it seem that the mausoleum was a labyrinthine building. Its wooden walls were coated with marble-patterned wallpaper, and once the furnishings were added, the illusion was seamless. In their naivety, first-timers Annerl and Schwartz constructed the set as a semi-permanent structure. It was a happy accident – the set was so solid and heavy, Coscarelli and his crew could sit on top of the mausoleum walls to get certain shots without fear of it all collapsing around them.

A similar illusion was achieved for the surrounding graveyard, which appears to be surprisingly thick with landscaped pockets of trees and shrubs. Coscarelli simply hired out 20th Century Fox's entire stock of fake tombstones and placed them in the north section of Chatsworth Park, an area which, in the 30 years since the film was released, has been partially turned into a largely empty, very depressing parking lot.

"There were a couple of times when the headstones would just blow over," recalls Kathy Lester, the Lady in Lavender. "They had to play around with

those a bit to make them nice and sturdy.”

Doubling for the exterior of Morningside Mortuary was the Dunsmuir Mansion, a popular movie location in the Oakland Bay area that has also been seen in the James Bond film ‘A View To A Kill’ and the Mel Gibson civil war thriller, ‘The Patriot’. Right before the ‘Phantasm’ crew moved in, the mansion also played host to a porn film called ‘Little Girls Blue’. Finally, the arched gateway and tree-lined drive leading up to Morningside was more than 350 miles away at the Cobb Estate in Pasadena – the crew simply added fake metal lettering to the top of the arch and ‘accidentally’ backed a van into a road sign that was spoiling shots of the gates.

When all four elements were fused together, they brought Morningside to life as a vast, atmospheric and impressive location. They also gave ‘Phantasm’ an air of class that defied its origins as a low budget film directed by a 20 year old kid.

Reggie: “Hey, it was a good idea not to let your little brother come to the funeral and see Tommy like this.”

Jody: “Yeah. After mom and dad’s funeral, he had nightmares for weeks.”

After Tommy’s funeral is over and the mourners have departed, Mike spies the undertaker, whom he has dubbed the Tall Man, stealing the coffin from its grave. Its apparent weight doesn’t appear to be an obstacle, and the Tall Man picks it up and throws it into the back of a hearse with ease. (Scrimm was once asked by journalist Darren Gross how this effect was achieved. “We removed the body,” he deadpanned).

Troubled by what he has witnessed, Mike calls at the home of an elderly psychic and her cute granddaughter for advice.

“I’m really scared about something that I did. I was messing around up at Morningside Cemetery, and I saw something - something really scary.”

The granddaughter asks Mike to place his hand in a sinister wooden casket.

In a sequence lifted from Frank Herbert’s book ‘Dune’, Mike’s hand starts to hurt, but he finds that he can’t remove it until he has conquered his fear.

“Fear is the killer. That’s what Grandmother wants you to learn. It was all in your mind.”

The character of the fortune teller has long intrigued ‘Phantasm’ fans (or ‘phans’ as they have become known). Speaking only through her granddaughter with whom she appears to have a telepathic link, the elderly lady obviously knows more than she is letting on, and may even be a major part of the mystery. Coscarelli was quick to pick up on this, and would go on to drop further hints about her role in subsequent sequels.

Intrigued by what Mike claims he has witnessed, the granddaughter later visits the Morningside. Wandering through its ornate corridors, she finds a door from behind which a high-pitched humming sound can be heard. Opening the door just a crack, she is bathed in bright light. We don’t see whatever is in there as Coscarelli cuts to an exterior shot of the funeral parlour, but the girl’s scream lingers long in the air.

A major element in the appeal of ‘Phantasm’ is the film’s unforgettable musical score. It was composed by Fred Myrow, a conductor and musician who had also produced music for the likes of ‘Soylent Green’ and ‘Leo The Last’, and who had collaborated with Jim Morrison of The Doors. After scoring ‘Jim The World’s Greatest’ for Coscarelli, Myrow was happy to be asked to work on ‘Phantasm’.

“I very much enjoyed the working relationship,” he told G.A.S.P. magazine.

“When Don called a few months later and said, ‘I’m doing something that my family is putting together and have very minimal funds, but I have a hunch that this could become a cult classic of sorts, would you help us out?’, I went down and met with him and I could see that it was really a labour of love on his part, so I agreed to do it.”

Using just a keyboard, a rock drum and a guitar, he produced a chilling, gothic theme that was as repetitive as it was simple. Because of the low budget, Myrow aimed for an atmospheric feel and styled the music so that it could be reused throughout the film.

“Don is much more sensitive to music than most film directors,” he said.

“Some directors do a film that is basically completed and the music just adds a few elements, but Don is there the whole time. He really cares and has a great sensitivity to music.

“He’s probably one of the most exacting directors to work for because every split-second of that thing has to make him happy. So, Don is very much involved, not in the writing of the music, but certainly in supervising the way it comes out, and that’s one of the reasons I’ve tended to stay with him. He’s really happy when you nail it.”

The ‘Phantasm’ theme has certainly struck a chord with rock and metal bands. It inspired a thrash band of the same name, features in the likes of ‘Left Hand Path’ by Entombed, was covered by Hungarian thrashers Tormenator and has been namechecked by the likes of The Ravenous and Toxodeath. Dialogue from the film has also featured in ‘Guilty For Being Tight’ by Municipal Waste and ‘Hearse’ by Marduk.

A short scene where Reggie joins Jody on the porch for a brief duet also de-

serves a special mention. Intended to show Reggie using a guitar tuning fork as a prelude to a later plot point, it offers Thornbury a showcase for one of his own memorable compositions, ‘Sittin’ Here At Midnight’. It’s a strange scene, not least because you can see that the two actors are really playing their instruments, and is one that has proven to be popular with viewers to the point that Thornbury recorded it as a special audio track for the laserdisc re-release of the film many years later

“We’re hot as love.”

The next time Mike sees the Tall Man, it takes place not at Morningside, but in broad daylight on the town’s main shopping street, and is another stylish scene which offers a truly sublime chill. Wandering idly along and peering in through the shop windows, Mike turns to see the undertaker striding purposefully down the sidewalk outside Reggie’s ice cream parlour. Reggie is at the kerb, loading fresh supplies into the back of his ice cream truck, and the cold vapours of the freezer compartment are billowing out into the open air.

As the Tall Man passes through the icy cloud, he pauses. Turning slowly to face Mike, he raises his hands in a peculiar conductor-like fashion, his face a strange mix of ecstasy and revulsion. The hypnotic moment is over almost as quickly as it began, and as Reggie slams the freezer door shut and cuts off the cold vapours, the Tall Man recovers, turns and strides away once more.

Mike’s sense of growing unease causes him to start having bad dreams about the Tall Man. This allows Coscarelli to display his flair for staging a macabre setpiece with tableaux such as one where Mike climbs into his bed, only to ‘awake’ to find that the bed is now at the centre of the cemetery, and that the Tall Man is looming over him while ghouls burst out of the ground at either side.

“When you’re in the vicinity of the Tall Man, reality can distort, time can distort, and things are not what they seem,” Coscarelli later suggested.

The weirdness continues as Mike follows Jody to a local bar and watches while he picks up a beautiful young woman. Leaving together, she convinces Jody to take a stroll through the cemetery at Morningside. She is, of course, the Lady in Lavender. Luckily for Jody, Mike is still following. While hiding in the bushes, Mike hears those scurrying sounds again, and this time something small and cowed charges at him with a furious roar. Mike inadvertently saves his brother from suffering the same fate as Tommy when he bursts screaming out of the bushes, interrupting the lovers with hysterical claims that he is being pursued by hooded dwarves. Jody is not happy, especially when he returns to his date to find that she has vanished.

“It was probably just a... a gopher in heat!”

About those dwarves... there is no getting away from the fact that they look exactly like the Jawas of ‘Star Wars’. But Coscarelli swears that he had already conceived of the creatures and started putting them before the camera long before the George Lucas film took the world by storm.

“We first started shooting in April of 1977,” he told Fangoria magazine. “One of the first scenes filmed was of a dwarf jumping on Mike’s back. A few weeks later, somebody comes in and says, ‘Hey, I just saw that new science fiction picture and they’ve got a thing in there that looks just like one of your dwarves’.” In subsequent sequels to ‘Phantasm’, Coscarelli would try to establish some distance by giving his dwarves hideously distorted faces and having them utter inhuman, guttural growls and shrieks.

Later, while working on their beloved Plymouth Barracuda car at home, Mike is beset by the dwarves once more. Seeing someone approach, he strikes out with a hammer – only to find that he has just injured his older brother, who scoffs at Mike’s wild claims.

Mike: “They were jumping on the car, and making these...these weird sounds!”

Jody: “You sure it wasn’t that retarded kid, Timmy, up the street?”

Once memorably described by drive in movie critic Joe Bob Briggs as “The most outrageous muscle car ever to legally prowl the highways,” the ‘cuda has long been associated with ‘Phantasm’ and its three sequels. Together with Scrimm, Bannister and the silver spheres, it is one of the main constants that you can always expect to see in any of the entries in the ongoing saga. Coscarelli knew that he wanted to immortalise the car on film ever since seeing a high school buddy show off a Sassy Grass Green pistol-grip fourspeed ‘cuda with a white interior.

By the time he made ‘Phantasm’, such muscle cars were out of fashion, and the production was able to pick up a cheap 1971 four-speed model with a 340 engine. It was in bad shape, but one trip to the body shop later, the car was spray-painted mirror black (a job which was made easier by the fact that Thornbury’s brother happened to be a custom car painter), featured slightly flared rear quarter panels and boasted Crager chrome rims. Unfortunately, the engine was shot, and despite its flawless big screen appearance, it caused the production a lot of trouble.

At the end of filming, the original ‘cuda used for ‘Phantasm’ was given to a crew member who later sold it for \$1,000, and it has never been seen since. For the sequels, the producers were forced to find alternative models, includ-

ing a convertible version, although Coscarelli would later hold onto a modified 318 model that was used for 'Phantasm II' (he is also the proud owner of a red-on-red AAR 'cuda).

"You're crazy, man."

Jody refuses to believe Mike's tall tales, and tells a friend that he suspects his younger brother is inventing bizarre lies to try and stop him from leaving town.

"I'm thinking of sending him off to live with his aunt... He's a tough little kid. I love him. I'm going to miss him."

Unused footage from an early cut of 'Phantasm' revealed that following the deaths of their parents, Mike and Jody now own the local bank, thus allowing the pair of them to put off the inevitability of having to grow up and face their responsibilities, and also explaining why a thirteen year old is able to openly drive motorbikes and muscle cars without being bothered by the local police – the tie-in novelisation features a line in which Jody jokes that he will 'repossess the sheriff's squad car' if the law dares interfere with them.

It is interesting to note that Coscarelli, a young man in his early twenties when he directed 'Phantasm', ensures that none of the film's main heroes have anything that could be regarded as being a 'serious' job. Jody works in the music business, Mike doesn't even appear to go to school and Reggie is an ice cream salesman – a dream job for many a child. For Mike and Jody, the flip side of losing their parents is the freedom that the brothers have gained. They have a maid, an entire house to themselves, the run of a whole

town to enjoy and no rules or regulations that they have to live by – there is quite literally no one who can tell them what time to go to bed or what clothes to wear. It is a childhood fantasy that most of us have enjoyed, and a concept that director John Hughes would later create a whole franchise around in the 'Home Alone' movies. But in 'Phantasm', Coscarelli is determined to show us the flip side of such a dark daydream.

Scared that Jody is going to accelerate his plans, Mike sticks a knife down his sock and heads off to Morningside in the dead of night to get some proof, thereby providing the film with its weirdest and most talked-about moment. After hiding inside an empty coffin to avoid being caught by a sinister henchman of the Tall Man, Mike sneaks through the funeral home's empty marble corridors. Hearing a strange, high-pitched whistling sound, he turns to see a bizarre chrome ball flying through the air. Throwing himself to the floor, Mike narrowly avoids being struck by the silver sphere. He flees as the ball turns for another pass, but runs straight into the arms of the henchman. Only Mike knows that the sphere is approaching, and a close-up reveals two vicious hooked blades sliding out of the ball and locking into place as it hurtles towards the struggling figures.

Mike finally escapes the henchman's clutches by sinking his teeth into the man's arm. He drops to one side and rolls out of the way, but the minion has no such chance of escape. The silver sphere thuds directly into the centre of the man's forehead, the hooked blades embedding themselves deep in the flesh. As the minion struggles to remove it, a drill-bit slides out of the ball and proceeds to pierce his skull. Mike looks on in horror as a great jet of blood and semi-solid matter erupts from the rear of the ball, until the henchman finally topples over, dead and drained.

It is a fantastic moment in a film packed with surprises, and leaves the audience wondering where Coscarelli will take them next. What is the silver sphere? Where did it come from, and why did it attack another of the Tall Man's minions? Perhaps not surprisingly, Coscarelli's inspiration for the murderous chrome ball came directly from a particularly vivid nightmare.

"I had a dream, just your basic nightmare, only I found myself being pursued down unending corridors by this silver sentinel which I could not escape," he told Rue Morgue magazine. "While writing 'Phantasm', it seemed like a perfect device with which to arm the Tall Man - a digital vampire, if you will." To realise this standout setpiece, Coscarelli contracted a film effects craftsman called Willard Green. A specialist in mechanics, when Coscarelli and Pepperman first visited Green they found him hard at work constructing gigantic turntables for car commercials. For a grand total of \$763, Green deliv-



ered a master sphere rig containing the blades, drill and blood pumping system as well as three interchangeable sphere faces which would allow it to be filmed from different angles.

He also produced several balls formed from moulded plastic which had been put through a vacuum-metalizing process to give them their chrome look – these could be thrown or tossed for shots of the ball travelling through the mausoleum corridors. For the effect of the ball's blood exhaust, the actor playing the Tall Man's minion, Ken Jones, had a tube running up his sleeve and into the unseen side of the sphere from where it could be pumped through. The fluid that would bubble up from Jones' head as the drillbit made contact was simply flushed through a syringe, but the stage blood had congealed slightly by the time that the scene was filmed. To unclog the syringe, art director David Brown desperately squeezed down harder, causing a fountain of gore to explode from the actor's head. It was a happy accident that Coscarelli was delighted with, and he decided to leave the finished effect in the film.

However, it also meant trouble with the ratings board, who wanted to give the movie an 'X' – commonly viewed as the commercial kiss of death because it is associated with pornographic films; to this day, American newspapers and broadcasters refuse to advertise such fare. Luckily, help was at hand from Charles Champlin, a respected film critic for the LA Times whose earlier championing of Coscarelli had also convinced Universal to pick up 'Jim, The World's Greatest' for distribution.

"Charles Champlin came to our defence," Scrimm explained to Worlds of Horror. "The ratings board was persuaded that the whole thing really wasn't gory because the audiences would invariably laugh at the end, because it was so outrageous to see all that blood pumping out. So they reversed themselves and gave us an 'R'."

They may have opted to stick with their original rating if they had noticed the flow of urine which runs down the dead henchman's leg and pools around the feet of a clearly horrified Mike, something which Coscarelli believes has been obscured by years of dodgy prints and washed-out video conversions, and has only really come to light in the age of laserdiscs and DVDs...

"The filming of the sphere was actually pretty funny because for the first few days, we didn't realise that they were mirrors," Coscarelli said. "We kept trying to light them... It wasn't until about day three when somebody on the set realised and actually yelled it out - 'You don't light the sphere, you light what's reflected in the sphere!' Once we realised that, it was a whole new ball game."

To achieve the shots of the sphere in flight, the production went for another low-fi approach.

"We had someone on the crew who was a high school baseball pitcher, so we had a plastic ball that we fabricated, filled it with sand and then he would skim behind the camera," revealed Pepperman. "We would run the camera in reverse, and he would just throw it right over the camera towards the opposite end of the hallway. Playing it back, it looks like the sphere is coming right toward the camera. It worked out great."

D. Kerry Prior, who would provide spheres for other films in the 'Phantasm' saga, told France's Cinefantastique magazine that the sphere was the 'perfect monster', its simple design allowing it to adopt a gimmick first seen on screen in the 1960 movie 'Peeping Tom'.

"It reflects the general surroundings, but also the fear, the terror that is written on the face of its prey," Prior said. "This effect of capturing the victim's own death image is more terrifying, more horrible, than any mask of a monster who grimaces, froths at the mouth and drools blood... I am convinced that the spheres have touched the unconscious of the public as few monsters have."

This single scene ensured that 'Phantasm' stood out in a season crowded with genre flicks that were all vying for attention, as author and artist Stephen Romano recalled in his afterword for the release of the 'Phantasm' movie tie-in novel.

"Though I was too young to understand such things at the time, the image of the flying silver sphere with the drill that sucked out your brain was impossible to escape that summer," he said. "Everyone was talking about it. The media was buzzing. My older, braver friends, who had snuck in with their parents to see it at the drive-in, gasped that it was the freakiest thing they had ever seen."

More was to follow. Immediately after witnessing the work of the silver sphere, Mike encounters the Tall Man. It's a supremely chilling moment; unable to take his eyes off the body of the dead henchman, Mike doesn't see the Tall Man stepping out of the shadows at the far end of the corridor. For several seconds, the undertaker simply stands there unseen, silently observing the boy. When Mike finally realises that he is being watched, he whirls around and slowly edges his way forward toward the corridor intersection. The Tall Man mirrors him step for step. After a brief silent standoff, Mike makes a run for it, and the Tall Man explodes into motion, frantically chasing him through the backrooms of the mausoleum until the boy finally manages to slam a steel basement door shut, preventing the Tall Man from following. Mike pauses to catch his breath, but Coscarelli isn't done with us yet. A frantic tapping sound alerts the boy to the fact that the Tall Man's twitching fingers are caught in the jam of the door. Without a pause, Mike hacks at the hand with the knife, severing several of the undertaker's fingers. This causes a welter of blood to splash messily across the wall and floor, and delivers yet another tremendous sucker punch – the colour of the Tall Man's blood is a bright, inhuman yellow.

As if to accentuate the implications of this revelation, the undertaker lets out an unearthly wail of pain from the other side of the door while Mike watches the severed digits wriggle and writhe in a puddle of the yellow blood. Realising that he finally has the proof he needs, Mike picks up one of the fingers and narrowly escapes the clutches of several hooded dwarves before climbing out of a broken window and running back home through the menacing dark.

Given his concerns over the similarities between the hooded dwarves and the Jawas of 'Star Wars', Coscarelli was equally as alarmed when he heard reports that the android character in the just-released 'Alien' was also revealed to have yellow-coloured blood. When he caught up with the Ridley Scott film, he was relieved to find that it was actually white fluid.

The next morning, Jody finds Mike asleep on the stairs, a shotgun and a small wooden box containing the Tall Man's finger cradled in his lap. Telling his big brother the whole story, Mike opens up the box to reveal the finger, still twitching and oozing in a puddle of yellow gore. Faced with the evidence, Jody immediately supports his little brother.

"Okay, I believe you... What's going on up there?"

It's a deft move on Coscarelli's part, one which allows him to sidestep the usual genre cliché of nobody believing the hero's warnings, and moves the plot quickly and efficiently forward while also strengthening the audience's affection for the bond that exists between the two brothers. As journalist David Flint has noted, "Coscarelli's script foregrounds loyalty, courage, friendship and perseverance... instead of simply setting up 'empowerment' clichés, he gives each of the three leads the capacity not only to face the horrors, but also to appreciate each other's worth in the process."

This is apparent in the scene where Reggie arrives just as the brothers decide to take their evidence to the sheriff. Checking the box, Mike discovers that the Tall Man's severed finger has transformed into some kind of red-eyed bug from hell. Reggie watches in amazement as the brothers struggle with the creature, which is eventually destroyed when they force it down a kitchen garbage grinder.

"What the hell is going on?"

The hell-bug was created by Kate Coscarelli, who performed sterling production design, makeup and costume work for 'Phantasm' under the aliases of S. Tyler and Shirley Mae. Unable to afford to have the monster created from scratch, she simply bought a model from a store and adapted it. Sadly, the effect as executed on screen doesn't really match the level of creativity with which it was conceived, and whenever it is seen in close-up, the hell-bug is a rare low point in the film's stable of special effects. A scene was shot near the climax of the film which involved Mike seeing the creature again, this time sitting at the centre of a vast web. However, Coscarelli chose to discard it from the final cut. "It didn't work out so good," was all he said by way of explanation. But there is no faulting the energy and effort which Baldwin and Thornbury throw into their struggle with the beast, and they make the finished film's hell-bug scene work through a very convincing display of physical acting.

"You'll be safe here. Just lock all the doors and windows. And don't follow me."

With their proof gone, Jody sneaks into Morningside to have a look around and see if he can score something else that he can take to the authorities. But the law was something that Coscarelli wanted to avoid featuring in his movie (they didn't feature in any of the sequels until the fourth instalment, and even then turned out to be agents of the Tall Man).

"A horror story isn't a police story," the director explained in the 'Phantasm' advertising manual. "The cops would have injected a note of logic into the movie that would have stopped the action dead in its tracks. There are enough police on television – why let them spoil the fun?"

At Morningside, Jody doesn't make it further than the basement before he is gang-tackled by hooded dwarves. Fleeing down the driveway, he is followed by a speeding hearse, and manages to fire off a shotgun blast before diving out of its path. As the headlights swing back towards him, he prepares for another shot – but the vehicle is revealed to be the 'cuda driven by Mike, who has ignored his big brother's orders to stay put. The pair race away as the hearse gives chase, and they are forced into a high-speed duel that ends when Jody fires the shotgun into the hearse's engine and causes it to crash.

"There's nobody driving that mother!"

Examining the wreck, the brothers are shocked to discover that one of the hooded dwarves is behind the wheel of the hearse. Even worse, the dwarf resembles Tommy, their friend whose death opened the movie. Using a strangely isolated phone box, Jody calls Reg and asks him to come and collect the dwarf's body in his ice cream truck.

"What's all this yellow shit coming out of his head?"

Back at their house, Reggie and the brothers try to figure out what the Tall Man is up to, and what they can do about it. While Mike worries that the bodies of his parents may have been stolen from their caskets and transformed in the same manner as Tommy, Reggie comes up with a plan.

"What we've got to do is snag that tall dude, and stomp the shit out of him, and we'll find out what the hell is going on up there!"

Jody is more concerned about keeping Mike safe, so he asks Reggie to take Mike to an antique store run by two sisters, Sally and Susie. Mike protests, but his brother appears to be finally facing up to some of the parental responsibilities that he has inherited, and will brook no argument. Reluctantly

agreeing to his elder brother's demands, Mike allows Reggie to drive him over.

In the original cut of 'Phantasm', Sally and Susie were the girlfriends of Reggie and Jody, but the majority of their scenes were left on the cutting room floor as Coscarelli chopped and changed the course of the movie. Most of the trimmed footage can be found on recent special edition DVD releases – they include a scene set at the China Grove Bank where Jody enters his office and canoodles with Susie, a teller, and a light-hearted scene set at Reggie's ice cream parlour where Sally helps a drunken Jody turn Mike into a human sundae. As it stands, there is no real reason why the two girls should be running an antique shop, but the movie tie-in novelisation reveals that Jody has used his position as owner of the bank to install Sally as manager and keep the business going mainly because he knows Mike loves rooting around in all the old junk that can be found there.

At the store, a worried Mike takes his mind off his concern for Jody and Reggie by half-heartedly wandering among the antiques. But the mystery of the Tall Man has permeated even the history of China Grove, something which Mike realises when he finds an old photograph featuring Morningside Mausoleum. In front of the funeral home stands a black horse-drawn funeral carriage, and sitting on it wearing the sombre uniform of an old-fashioned

Jody leaves for Morningside without him.

"You're never coming back, you goddamned bastard! Don't leave me alone!" It's a strange scene, one where Coscarelli plays on Mike's fears of being abandoned and Jody's (terrible) attempts at being a responsible adult. As scary as the Tall Man, the dwarves and the silver sphere are, Mike is more frightened of losing his big brother, so he focuses his attention on using whatever is to hand to get him out of the bedroom. One inventive (and dangerous!) trick involving a hammer and a shotgun shell later, Mike is racing down the stairs and heading for the front door, intending to take the motorbike to catch up with Jody. Pausing only to slip a Colt pistol into the waistband of his jeans, he yanks the door open – and finds the Tall Man standing unexpectedly on the other side.

"I've been waiting for you."

The Tall Man pauses only to show Mike his newly-regenerated fingers before grabbing him by the neck and hauling him outside. Mike puts up a game fight, but the Tall Man defeats him by casually lifting the boy a foot off the floor and carrying him to a waiting hearse. It's a seamless shot, smoothly executed in a single take, and in common with some of 'Phantasm's' best moments, one that was achieved simply and cheaply by having Mike step off the porch of the house and onto a wheeled camera cart which the crew then



undertaker is none other than the Tall Man. As Mike's mind reels with the realisation that the Tall Man is not a new phenomenon, the photograph comes to life in his hands; we see the Tall Man slowly turn his head to look out of the image at the audience, and hear the horse whinny softly before the photograph returns to normal. A startled Mike realises that he has to tell Jody and rushes back to the girls.

"No questions! You must take me home!"

The sequence that follows was filmed inside the darkened Chatsworth warehouse and makes for another eerie scene – so much so that it graces the back cover of the film's Japanese souvenir cinema programme.

As Sally drives and talks to Susie, a worried Mike spots Reggie's overturned ice cream truck lying at the side of a mist-shrouded road. Urging the girls to stay inside their car, Mike investigates. There's no sign of Reggie, but the truck's freezer compartment door has been forced open, and the dwarf-corpse of Tommy is missing. Realising that they are not alone, Mike hurries back into the car, but the girls have had enough, and demand some answers before they leave the scene. It's too late – the car is attacked by a pack of hooded dwarves, and as the girls are mauled, Mike is thrown through the rear windscreen. He recovers in time to see the car's tail lights fading into the darkness as the creatures whisk their captives back to Morningside.

Meanwhile, Jody has fallen asleep while waiting for Reggie to return, and suffers a nightmare in which the Tall Man bears down on him in a Morningside hallway while clawed hands emerge from the marble vaults to drag him down to hell. He wakes to find a bruised, dishevelled Mike standing before him. Mike tells Jody what has happened, but if he was expecting his brother to tell him to go fire up the 'cuda, he is dismayed when Jody locks him into his bedroom to keep him from further harm. Distraught, Mike watches as

rolled down the driveway towards the hearse.

"Phantasm' was entirely from the attitude of 'let's put on a show'," Coscarelli later said in the documentary 'Phantasmagoria'. "The crew was entirely friends and students. The production designer was my mother, and the special effects were done by my college roommate. We were figuring out things as we'd go.

"The basic challenge was to put together some pretty sophisticated effects with paper clips and some tape."

Locked in the back of the hearse as the Tall Man whisks him off to Morningside, Mike tries to kick out the rear windscreen before remembering the Colt. His first shot shatters the glass window; before the Tall Man can react, he aims a second shot down into the wheel of the hearse. As the Tall Man loses control of the speeding vehicle, Mike dives out of the broken window, rolling as he hits the ground in time to see the hearse strike a telegraph pole and explode (the explosion is somewhat illogical, but is perfectly in keeping with the anarchic tone that Coscarelli has taken pains to establish, and besides, it's a bit late to start worrying about logic at this point). With the Tall Man seemingly vanquished, Mike continues on his way up to Morningside to find Jody. Jody, meanwhile, has broken into the vault containing the remains of his parents and has dragged his father's coffin out into a mausoleum corridor to check if the Tall Man has interfered with the remains. Steeling himself, he prepares to open the lid – but loses his nerve and slams it shut at the last moment.

"He HAS to be in there."

By the time Mike arrives, Jody has moved on, but the coffin is still where he left it. Offering up a silent prayer, Mike opens the coffin and peers in. Whatever he finds (or doesn't find) sends him screaming in terror through the mar-

ble corridors, but his flight is brought to an abrupt halt when a familiar sound is heard. The silver sphere is returning, and as its hooked blades lock into place, this time there is nowhere for Mike to hide.

"Oh my God!"

Mike is saved from a horrible death when Jody appears at his shoulder and shatters the silver sphere in mid air with a blast from the shot gun. The brothers embrace as Mike awkwardly tries to describe what he saw when he opened the coffin, finally giving up. It is interesting to note here that Jody declines to reveal to his younger brother that it was he who opened the vault, or that he tried and failed to do what Mike has done. When Mike suggests that they forget about it and try and find out what lies behind the door where the humming sound is emanating from, Jody readily agrees. But before they can do so, Reggie surprises them.

Mike: "Hey Reg, you ain't dead!"

Reggie: "No, and I ain't three foot two yet, either."

Reggie reveals that after he was brought to Morningside, he hid inside a casket before rescuing the kidnapped girls and sneaking them out through a window. A superb deleted scene which would have elaborated on this shows Mike trying to free his friend from a locked coffin, oblivious to the fact that Reggie has just entered the room through a doorway behind him. If Reggie is the one who has opened the door, who the hell is inside the casket? As the two friends ponder this, the casket lid begins to rise, forcing them to lock it tight before fleeing.

Jody: "Well, after you, my friend."

Reggie: "You be my guest!"

Whatever we were expecting to see inside the room, Coscarelli manages to side-step us once again. At the centre of the grand old mausoleum is a startlingly bright futuristic chamber. Almost surgically white, the room is empty save for stacked rows of barrels that face a pair of chrome waist-high metal poles. The poles are reverberating, and are the source of the intense humming sound that fills the air. Mike approaches the poles while Reggie and Jody check out the barrels. As Mike discovers that the space between the poles forms some kind of invisible void where his outstretched hand disappears from view, Jody is revolted to find that the barrels are filled with freshly transformed dwarves. Suddenly, Mike is sucked in through the void. Tumbling through the air against a blood-red sky that churns over on itself with furious motion, Mike is saved by Jody, who has managed to catch hold of his belt. In the few seconds before he is pulled back into the white room, Mike looks down upon a fantastic sight: a rocky, desolate landscape, identical in all directions for as far as the eye can see, broken only by a long line of hooded dwarves who are carrying barrels off into the distance.

Jody and Reggie haul Mike back into the white room, patting down his smoking clothes as Mike realises what is going on at Morningside Mausoleum.

Mike: "They're using them for slaves - the dwarves! And they've got to crush them, because of the gravity... and the heat. And this is the door to their planet."

Reggie: "Yeah... and these guys are all ready to go."

At this point in the film, savvy genre fans may notice a distinct similarity between 'Phantasm' and what is generally regarded as the worst film in movie history (but not by me – as far as I'm concerned, that particular honour goes to 'Jaws: The Revenge' every single time). David Flint nailed it in his review of the movie.

"'Phantasm' mixes genres with such smart but unselfconscious verve that it is only later you realise you have been watching a sci-fi horror film about grave robbers from another world," he said. "That's right - the same plot as 'Plan 9 From Outer Space'!"

The startling effect of what has become known as the red planet was achieved by filming on location at the Santa Fe Dam. Coscarelli created an optical illusion by placing the camera at the foot of the dam's sloping walls and filming up over its rocky surface. He and Pepperman then gathered twenty neighbourhood kids, packed them inside the Tall Man's hearse, drove them out to the dam, dressed them in dwarf robes created by his mother and placed them with the barrels at strategic points along the wall of the dam.

With a series of cardboard cut-outs set up at the furthest end, Coscarelli was able to film what looked like a long line of dwarves stretching over the horizon. The red, churning sky was added as a matte later – Coscarelli painted a wall of the Chatsworth warehouse red, installed red studio lights and filled the warehouse with smoke to provide an eerie, rolling, red-on-red effect.

Mike's tumble through the gateway was achieved by filming him on a trampoline, then editing his high-speed acrobatics to make it look like he was in freefall. Together with the silver sphere, the red planet is among the three major scenes that people refer to whenever 'Phantasm' is discussed – but Coscarelli saves his biggest surprise for the very last scene.

The three friends are separated when the humming stops, the brightness dies and the mausoleum is plunged into darkness. Using a lighter for illumination,

Mike is confronted by a hooded dwarf and flees the room, followed closely by Jody. When all returns to normal and the humming resumes, Reggie finds that he is now alone in the white room, and the only one who can shut the Tall Man's operation down. Inspiration strikes as Reggie studies the reverberating chrome poles and is reminded of the tuning fork that he used while performing his porch duet with Jody earlier. In that scene, Reggie stopped the instrument from humming by pressing his hand against its twin forks.

As he summons up the courage to do the same with the gateway, Jody and Mike are searching for each other in the cemetery outside the funeral home. The Lady in Lavender creeps up on Mike and is about to stab him in the back when, inside the white room, Reggie clamps his hands over the chrome poles and stops them from reverberating. The effect is instantaneous; as the Lady in Lavender gasps and falls to the ground, a mighty storm rises up, and Morningside is lashed by howling winds. In the white room, the humming noise has returned, except this time it is growing steadily louder as everything starts to get sucked through the space gate. Reggie battles his way out of the room as barrel after barrel is dragged into the whirlpool-like void between the poles. Making his way outside, he shields his face against the flying debris of the wind storm, and struggles across the front lawn to help a lone female figure who has apparently already succumbed to the rigours of the storm. But Reggie is in mortal danger, for as the audience can see, the unconscious woman is really the Lady in Lavender...

The actors also found themselves in danger during this scene thanks to the film's mischievous thirteen year old star.

"I wanted to get this scene first time because I am cold, and I am dirty, and I am pissed off, because sweet Michael is throwing stones and debris in front of this HUGE wind machine," Lester recalled in the documentary 'Phantasmagoria' – something which Bannister also remembers with a wry grin.

"I got hit more than a few times," he said.

"Oh, that's because that's the only story they can remember," Baldwin retorted. "They're all so old, they can't remember any other interesting stories, so they always come back to 'he put rocks in the wind machine'!"

Out in the storm, Jody finds Mike just in time for the brothers to witness Reggie being stabbed through the heart by the Lady in Lavender. Like Tommy before him, the last thing that Reggie sees before he dies is the woman turning into the Tall Man, who looks none the worse following his fiery death in the hearse crash.

Mike: "Come on, we've got to help him!"

Jody: "You can't help him. He's dead."

As the brothers speed away in the 'coda, the humming noise reaches a crescendo, and Morningside dissolves in a fuzzy bright explosion of light as the entire building is sucked through the space gate – an effect which eagle-eyed viewers will recognise as the exact same one used for the 'beam me up' scenes in the television show 'Star Trek'.

Mike: "What are we going to do without Reggie?"

Jody: "Reggie's the last he'll ever get. 'cause we're going to run that bastard straight down to hell."

The brothers decide to try and lure the Tall Man out to an old mine shaft 'by the end of Singer's Creek - a thousand feet straight down'. Jody heads off to remove the shaft's warning barriers and get the trap ready while Mike gathers more ammunition and weapons at home. As he moves nervously around the house checking that the doors and windows are secure, Mike appears subdued and exhausted. It doesn't last long; opening the curtains to check the lock on his bedroom window, Mike finds himself face to face with the Tall Man. As he throws himself backwards, the undertaker smashes his way through the glass and into the room (a scene that required several takes to get right as it was among the first that Baldwin and Scrimm filmed together, and Baldwin couldn't stop grinning whenever he saw the villain leering in at him through the window).

Mike tears through the house and looks for a way out, but Coscarelli catches us by surprise again when the front door suddenly blows inward and hurtles past Mike to reveal the Tall Man waiting on the other side – another ingenious scene that was achieved in a simple, lo-fi manner.

"Paul Pepperman put some straps onto the door, and stood behind the door holding the straps," Coscarelli revealed in Fangoria. "The door was unhinged so that, on cue, Paul could just run as fast as he could across the set, finally landing on his back with the door over him. He was wearing a helmet and was thoroughly padded to avoid injury."

"You play a good game, boy. But the game is finished. Now, you die!"

Mike runs out of the back of the house and heads for Singer's Creek, pursued all the way by the Tall Man, who appears to have established a telepathic link with the boy. Mike is plagued by nightmarish visions as he flees – tombstones burst out of the earth, and hands erupt from the ground to seize at his ankles. Finally, Mike makes it to the creek, and with the Tall Man hot on his heels manages to leap across the mouth of the mine shaft. The Tall Man is not so lucky – he plunges straight into the pit, and with one final lunge at Mike,

he falls. On a nearby rise, Jody triggers a rockfall, and huge boulders crash down the hillside to seal the top of the shaft. The brothers have done it; Mike looks up lovingly at the elder brother he adores as Jody punches the air in triumph...

...just as Mike wakes up in his own bed, and Coscarelli throws us another curveball, this time one inspired by 'Invaders From Mars'.

Throwing back the covers, Mike heads downstairs to where Reggie sits playing guitar before an open fire, and reveals that everything we have just seen has been a dream. It is Jody, not Reggie, who died, not long after Mike's parents had their own accident. Reggie has been looking after him ever since, but Mike is still convinced that the Tall Man is real.

Mike: "I know those rocks aren't going to hold him. First he took mom and dad, then he took Jody, and now he's after me."

Reggie: "Mike, that tall man of yours did not take Jody away. Jody died in a car wreck."

So is Mike just a troubled kid, one whose fear of abandonment has caused him to imagine and dream about everything we have just witnessed? This was certainly the case in the first draft of the screenplay, and if Coscarelli had gone with his original vision, the film would have ended with Mike turning away from a visit to Jody's grave to see Angus Scrimm as a preacher overseeing a nearby funeral – an imposing figure that the grief-stricken boy has woven into his fantasy. But the director wanted something with a bit more punch, and tried a number of different endings before finally settling on one which has ensured that anyone who watches 'Phantasm' will never forget it.

Reggie: "You know, partner, what we need is a change of scenery. Why don't you and me hit the road for a couple of weeks?"

Mike: "Where would we go?"

Reggie: "Well, I don't know. I guess we can figure that one out when we get there."

As Mike agrees and heads upstairs to pack a bag, Reggie starts playing his guitar again - 'Sittin' Here At Midnight', the same song that we saw him play with Jody earlier in the film. It's another odd moment, one which jars with Reggie's assertion that Mike has been dreaming this whole time.

Upstairs, Mike enters his bedroom and starts selecting items that he wants to take on the road trip. Picking up a Polaroid photograph of Jody, he considers it sadly for a moment before moving on to get some clothes.

Noticing that his mirrored cupboard door is open, Mike swings it closed – and reveals the reflection of the Tall Man on the other side of the room. Seeing him, Mike whirls around, his back to the mirror. Coscarelli zooms in to the Tall Man's face as the undertaker booms out a single word, one that resonates with malice and sinister intent:

"Boyyyyyy!"

The mirror shatters as clawed hands erupt through the glass to seize Mike and drag him back into the shadows, and the credits roll on 'Phantasm'.

It's a fantastic way to end a film in which you are never sure what is real and what is fantasy, and plays on some of our deepest childhood fears – the monster in the closet, the beast under the bed waiting to clutch at your exposed ankle and so on. The Tall Man is the ultimate bogeyman: he lurks in the shadows, hides in your bedroom, kills parents and siblings and tears you away from your family and friends. In his much recommended book 'Nightmare USA', David Flint describes the Tall Man as "...a negative Peter Pan, trying to draw Mike (like Wendy) into a never-never land beyond adulthood, out of time."

The impact of the final scene is so shocking that most viewers miss the fact that when the Tall Man is revealed in the mirror, he boasts short, neat hair. This was because Scrimm had assumed that filming on 'Phantasm' was long over, and by the time Coscarelli called him back, he had got rid of his long locks. A fast zoom and some clever lighting helped to disguise the change in his appearance.

Trimmed down from three hours to a more respectable 90 minutes, 'Phantasm' was picked up for distribution by Avco Embassy, a name familiar to horror and sci-fi fans as the outfit that distributed several important genre flicks like 'Escape From New York', 'Scanners', 'The Howling' and 'The Fog'.

Avco Embassy struck on a clever marketing campaign for the film. Instead of trying to explain its premise, they cut a series of trailers that played upon its weirder aspects and invited viewers to guess what it was actually about ('Phantasm: is it a nightmare... an illusion... an evil... a fantasy... is it alive?'). With a programme of midnight premieres and a whirlwind promotional tour for Coscarelli and Scrimm, the publicity worked, and the distributors soon struck on fresh ideas to advise the paying public that the movie was now 'open everywhere like a freshly dug grave'. Describing the film as 'The ultimate in terror' and 'A fiendish undertaking', they also coined the now-classic tag lines 'If this one doesn't scare you, you're already dead!' and 'If your skin doesn't crawl, it's on too tight!'

The advertising manual is a fascinating glance into a bygone age of movie

hucksterism that has all but vanished. It advised exhibitors on a number of different ways in which they could promote the film. These included competitions to find the loudest screamer, employing a local basketball player to dress up as the Tall Man and hand out certificates congratulating patrons on 'surviving' the movie, hiring a hearse for a 'spot-the-hearse' radio phone-in promotion or staging a hearse-stuffing contest as "the kind of publicity stunt that will launch a sensational word-of-mouth campaign... and the 'reel' winner will be your box office." It also suggested using local radio to invite people to describe their worst nightmares and reward the most vivid ones with 'a nightmare on the town' – a complimentary funeral bouquet and a chauffeured hearse to enjoy a meal at a local restaurant before heading back for the opening night of 'Phantasm'.

The publicity campaign tried to establish an air of doomed mystery about 'Phantasm', not least of which was the sad fact that silver sphere creator Willard Green died before the film's release and never got to see the ball in action.

"Mysteriously, all of his notes and drawings for the lethal looking gadget vanished," the manual stated. "And thus far, no one's been found who knows how the complex mechanism within the sphere works."

"There were too damned many accidents involving professional experienced people who knew their jobs," it went on to quote Coscarelli as saying. "First, a wind machine went berserk and started spinning in reverse. It caught a crew member's scarf and would have sucked his head in with it if Mike Baldwin, who co-stars in the picture, hadn't caught him around the waist and held on for dear life.

"Then there was the scene in which an avalanche of rocks rolled downhill into a pit. The rocks had been carefully 'tracked' so we knew their trajectory to the last inch. But somehow, one giant boulder flew over the pit – as if it had been hurled by a giant hand – and smashed headlong into a \$100,000 camera."

Another Coscarelli story in the advertising manual could almost have been a scene lifted from his screenplay.

"We had just finished the sequence in which ghoulish hands reach out of the grave, trying to drag Michael in with them. Mike returned to his home which is on a hillside in Tujunga Canyon, about twenty miles from Los Angeles.

That was the night that torrential rain hit California and made headlines across the country.

"Suddenly, in the wee hours of the morning, a gigantic mudslide began moving towards Mike's house. A small cemetery on the hill above had literally shaken loose, depositing caskets, cadavers and tons of mud in Mike's front yard... it had to be a nightmare for the youngster.

"Somehow, he shook it off. When the canyon was cleared a few days later and he was able to return to the set, he simply asked me, 'Is someone trying to tell us something?'"

'Phantasm' was released to positive reviews. Writing in the Hollywood Reporter, Robert Osbourne said: "The Avco-Embassy release is a genuine spooker that's been constructed with a vivid imagination - and a great many funeral tours at night time - and more than once causes the hair to go skyward... (Coscarelli) deserves credit for producing a genuine chiller. It won't win Oscars, but it'll win him a mass of friends among those who enjoy having their blood run cold." Dave Kehr described the film in the Chicago Tribune as "One of those happy surprises that sometimes bubble forth from the depths of low-budget filmmaking." And Joe Bob Briggs nailed the saga's appeal for many viewers when he said: "Basically it's about this real ugly-lookin' old skinny guy who goes around collecting dead bodies, and the way you know he's coming is that a flying Christmas tree ornament with daggers stickin' out of it tries to imbed itself in your skull. There's always a lot of talk about who the Tall Man is, where he is, where he comes from, whether he's dead or alive, why he wants the dead bodies, what the flying Christmas tree ornaments are for - and I never understand a WORD of it. But it's neat-o-mosquito."

Audiences responded positively and 'Phantasm' managed to score a \$12 million dollar return on its \$300,000 budget – not bad for a film about grave robbers from another planet.

It was a huge hit overseas, especially in Japan where the Tall Man became an unlikely movie star pin-up, and Avco Embassy sent Coscarelli and Scrimm on a world-wide trip to promote the film – if you can find the out-of-print MGM special edition DVD, watch the hilarious short promo that Scrimm shot in character for Australian television (where the film was released as 'the Never Dead' to avoid similarities with 'Fantasm', a soft-core sex comedy).

In the same way that Coscarelli borrowed the idea of dreams becoming reality from 'Invaders From Mars', 'Phantasm' has influenced a number of films that followed in its wake. Just a few years later, Wes Craven would lift the concept wholesale for 'A Nightmare On Elm Street', now a classic in its own right – the near-identical climax of Craven's film even features a character

being yanked backwards through the glass panel of a door. A paler imitation of the Tall Man turned up in 'Poltergeist II: The Other Side' and 'Poltergeist III' under the guise of Preacher Kane, and the scene where Morningside Mausoleum is sucked through the space gate was referenced at the climax of the original 'Poltergeist'. Even Stephen King isn't above lifting an idea for his book 'It' from the scene in 'Phantasm' where the photograph comes alive in Mike's hands.

Following the success of 'Phantasm', Coscarelli resisted demands for a follow-up. He had proven that he could deliver high quality on a low budget, but this quickly became both a boon and a curse – he was inundated with new scripts, but they were all for low-budget horror and sci-fi pictures. Wisely declining to helm the likes of 'Piranha II: Flying Killers', Coscarelli seized upon the sword and sorcery boom of the early 1980s to write and direct 'The Beastmaster', a film which has earned itself huge audiences thanks to repeated cable broadcasts. Coscarelli's mark was all over the finished film, but the experience of making the movie was not a happy one, and he has since described it as a film over which he ultimately lost control. The producers edited the movie beyond the director's original vision, and Coscarelli felt that it suffered greatly as a result. The experience was so painful for Pepperman that he left the film business altogether and parted company with Coscarelli on a professional level, although the two remain good friends.

Coscarelli experienced further heartbreak when he wasted several years working on an adaptation of Stephen King's 'Silver Bullet', finally leaving the project altogether.

His next film, 'Survival Quest', was a violent backwoods survivalist thriller in the 'Deliverance' and 'First Blood' mould, but his concept was again compromised, and the finished movie lost a lot of the bloodshed that he had originally envisioned. Finally, Coscarelli yielded to studio pressure and agreed to helm a big-budget sequel to 'Phantasm' for Universal.

Unfortunately for Michael Baldwin, Universal forced Coscarelli to use James Le Gros to play a more mature version of Mike.

ing Jim Wynorski's 'The Lost Empire' where he appeared alongside Scrimm, but he later dropped out of acting to concentrate on teaching music. Like Baldwin, Thornbury made a return to the fold for the next two entries in the 'Phantasm' saga, but seems genuinely puzzled by its impact and the obsession that it inspires in some viewers – an encounter with one unhinged individual who entered his home and announced that he was going to become the next Tall Man probably didn't help (Thornbury convinced the guy to leave by giving him armfuls of 'Phantasm' memorabilia).

'Phantasm' has transcended its low budget horror/sci-fi roots to become a bonafide global phenomenon. Since it first saw the light of a projector in 1979, the film has spawned fanzines, comic books and action figures. Collectors compete to pick up ever-rarer memorabilia from around the world – the most sought-after items are probably a promotional yellow finger in a plastic box embossed with the 'Phantasm' logo, a 12" 'blood yellow' vinyl single featuring a disco remix of the 'Phantasm' theme tune, the original 'X' rated British cinema quad poster, a limited edition die-cast model of the Plymouth Barracuda car and the hard-to-find first vinyl release of the soundtrack on the GEM label (if your copy has colour stills on the back of the sleeve instead of black-and-white, then it's the original release).

Opportunistic fans regularly design their own unofficial artefacts dedicated to the Phantasm saga – a cursory glance at eBay will reveal Phantasm cigarette lighters, clocks that bear the grim leer of the Tall Man and spheres fashioned from materials varying from Christmas baubles to custom-made chrome orbs. The lasting power of the movie is so great that the tie-in novel, which in 1979 was released only in the Far East, was translated back into English and reissued in the western hemisphere almost 30 years later.

"'Phantasm' was way ahead of its time," Pepperman said in 'Phantasamagoria'. "I think 'Phantasm' combined so many different elements that people hadn't seen before."

"To think that some decades later, people would still be watching, talking or thinking about 'Phantasm' was totally unimaginable at the time," Coscarelli



"'Phantasm' was a long time ago," Baldwin said. "I continued being an actor until I was probably 22 or something like that. I did lots of commercials and television and the whole routine. Studied acting, became a musician, and then when all my friends went off to college, I went off and found an Indian guru and lived on an ashram and had a grand time there."

Baldwin returned to the series when Coscarelli helmed 'Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead' and 'Phantasm IV: Oblivion'. Currently a resident of Austin where he has his own acting studio, Baldwin continues to work in film and television, writing and co-producing the movie 'Vice Girls' starring the deceased Lana Clarkson, who was famously shot dead by Phil Spector. He is also alleged to have introduced his friend Brad Pitt to Jennifer Aniston.

Reggie Bannister has maintained a healthy presence in low budget movies in the years since 'Phantasm'. He has appeared in most of Coscarelli's films to date, even in minor roles such as that of an aeroplane pilot in 'Survival Quest', and has become a true cult figure, regularly participating in fan conventions. He has also recorded and released a number of albums with his band, one of which featured a version of the 'Phantasm' theme tune.

'Phantasm' transformed Angus Scrimm into a screen villain of the highest calibre, and permanently associated the actor with the role. He has enjoyed a lot of subsequent film roles as a result of his stint as an alien graverobber, and is an enthusiastic, gracious and entertaining regular at horror and sci-fi conventions around the world. But he has admitted to feeling honoured to have become so deeply identified with such an iconic screen villain.

"What I think of him ethically and morally, I don't know!" he said. "But I love the role, it's marvellous to have so indelible a character to be associated with... I have a warm affection for the old son of a gun."

Bill Thornbury made a few more films after his stint on 'Phantasm', includ-

ing told Rue Morgue. "However, as I shot the film, I was the first to see that certain things were working really well.

"Angus was terrifying as the Tall Man. Michael Baldwin was giving the best performance by a child actor I'd ever seen. Bill Thornbury was great, and Reggie Bannister was creating this super-cool persona with the potential to be a major ass-kicker of the undead. The sphere prop was actually working as an onscreen driller-killer and the black Plymouth muscle car simply rocked. So I had a notion that it might turn out okay.

"But if anything, it was the fans who elevated our little tale into myth.

They're the ones that created the word of mouth, the superheated speculation about what the intentions of the film were. They enthusiastically supported each and every sequel and swarmed the conventions barraging us with questions about it.

"'Phantasm', by design, is an open-ended storyline that allows audiences to fill in the gaps. I think this is the charm and the allure of it."

So with episodes of the 'Masters of Horror' show, the acclaimed Joe Lansdale adaptation of 'Bubba Ho Tep' under his belt and a proposed movie of the novel 'John Dies At The End' in the works, does Coscarelli think that we have seen the last of the Tall Man?

"One thing I've learned about 'Phantasm'," the director said, "is that it is never over."

The 'Phantasm' saga's sheer sense of fun is best summed up by the copyright caution that follows the end credits of each sequel warning that infringements 'may result in the wrath of the Tall Man'. What better guardian could a film have?

PETE STAHL

Scream. Wool. Goatsnake. Apart from the fact that they're all incredible bands, what do they have in common? Come on, you know this one. You don't? Okay, I'll tell you. Pete Stahl. The guy was, and is responsible for being the voice behind some of the best records you'll ever hear, period. I spoke to Pete about his incredible musical odyssey at 2AM on a Friday morning, and just for the record, he's one of the nicest guys I've ever interviewed, and that's the damn truth...

Interview by Tim Mass Movement

Photo's by Marcus Bastida and others (credits where available)

MM: Wool, I think, is a very different entity to Scream, and Budspawn was a very different entity to Box Set...

Pete: Just goes to show the part a drummer plays in the band when you play as a group as we always do. We jam stuff out and create that way, so the drummer has a real integral part in shaping the music. We've been lucky to play with great drummers to this day. So Pete Moffat had a certain style that fit with the heavier... makes Budspawn heavier in effect; but Chris Patton was a completely different drummer, completely different style and that's the



MM: What initially led to the formation of Scream?

Pete: My brother and I played in a band when we were kids and messed around, learned guitar in high school. We got into punk rock and new wave and we got together our own band, we were especially inspired by the Bad Brains.

MM: How do you feel now when people refer to Scream as one of the seminal DC hardcore bands?

Pete: Awesome. You know, being part of a community as a musician, in the early days people come to our shows and it became, I guess what people call hardcore and I kinda feel part of that. The people in the bands, the people who came to shows, the people who put on the shows, it's a real community.

MM: Do you think there is a definitive Scream record? One album that defines the band.

Pete: We really killed it with our last record, so I hope it was a culmination of everything we've done really. I feel that it had elements of everything we were about. If you were a fan of the band you generally pick the first record, so for the fans it's the first record. I don't know, I think all the records show growth in learning how to play the instruments and write songs. I like them all.

MM: How long after Scream split up did you and Frank start Wool?

Pete: Pretty much straight away. Scream was on tour when we broke up.. Skeeter had bailed on us again and we were trying to find a bass player to get home – we still had 16 dates booked back to DC and we needed money. So we auditioned bass players, and in that time frame Chris and Kurt phoned us up and said they would come and help us play some shows and then ultimately joined the band. My brother and I, we thought, well we've done a lot with Scream, but let's see what we can do here, and put together a new band.

main difference between those two records.

MM: I seem to remember you guys recording a cover of the Sonics' the Witch...

Pete: Yeah. We did, we played covers. Like with Scream there was a whole record which we never did which was a whole bunch of covers that we used to do.

MM: I was wondering why you never released 'The Witch' as a seven inch, because that was one hell of a cover...

Pete: Thanks for saying that. It's funny, The Sonics were always one of my favourite bands and hearing them on commercials now? Weird. It's like I was saying with Scream, we had a whole bunch of stuff that was never release, pre Scream Me –it was how we really learned to play. Our first group of songs we used to play were by the Sonics, the Jam, Sham, Buzzcocks and other obscure stuff and that was pretty much in line with going from Scream to Wool, what we did. Wool was from Seattle and we did stuff like that.

MM: With the end of Wool it felt to me almost like you were moving towards a stoner vibe with "Short Term Memory Loss"...

Pete: Well it's funny, the whole stoner rock thing. I mean Scream used to play with the Obsessed, we always played together back in the day. Then when we ended up out here, I met this guy Hutch who does sound for Crooked Vultures, and does sound for Queens, and those bands. He introduced me to a couple of people out in the desert: David Hutchings who plays death metal and plays in Earthling which is another band I have we worked up that whole sound. We went on tour together and we laugh about that tour because we went all the way up the west coast of America and no-one gave a fuck. There were about 20-30 people at each place, no-one knew who we were. I certainly wouldn't say though that Stoner rock was something we were aiming for at all. There was this whole other record that Wool did that was never released that was definitely more garagey than stoner rock, and

we were doing some really cool stuff when we called it a day. My brother was just over it at the time and wanted to concentrate on family life. But we might have an opportunity to release it some day. I'm hoping that we get to do that. Someone just approached me about releasing that stuff, and I'd like to do it. We did around 17/18 songs and got everything ready for the new record and then we were dropped by London...

MM: Well, it seemed to me that you did 'Box Set', and there was no promotion for it at all, and it was a good record. A good, solid, punk rock record but it got no promotional support at all...

Pete: Nah, they kind of had me gone by the time that was out, it's like what happens to a lot of bands with major labels...

MM: What happened with Goatsnake? Was it the Desert Sessions or Goatsnake that came next?

Pete: I met Greg Anderson when I was with Wool and he was in his band Engine Kid up in Seattle. We became friends and we kinda talked about him moving down to LA to make a band and of course Dean I'd known for years;



what we could put together, spoke to Grohl to get into a studio – he offered that. So I think that's gonna happen, its difficult with people's families and living on different coasts but we are going to move it in that direction, work together on these new songs. We have enough material now to do a record.

MM: Is there any chance you may do a European tour with Scream, or just US?

Pete: Certainly I would love to do that. I've been talking to a couple of people about doing some shows in Germany, but it's what we can afford to do in terms of getting away from work and all that.

MM: Is there going to be another Goatsnake record?

Pete: Greg Anderson is the lord, it's kind of up to him. I certainly would be into it, but if Greg wants to do it, we will. We haven't discussed it to be honest at all. I would hope so.

MM: I know you work as a tour manager, Pete, so which do you prefer...Touring with your own bands or working for touring bands?

Pete: No doubt about it touring in my own band. That's what I live to do –



he actually played bass in Scream too, he filled in on a tour. So when those guys were working on that and they asked me to sing for them I was like "Fuck Yeah" I love the blues and always have, for me it comes from that blues perspective.

MM: It's quite a musical journey from Scream to Goatsnake. Do you ever think about the path that you've taken musically?

Pete: It's one continuous journey for me. It feels natural. We have some opportunities that I want to take advantage of – we're doing some shows with Scream out on the east coast, New York up until the summer and we may get together to do another Scream record. We have it written pretty much. Believe it or not we were going to do a split 7" – that was how it was presented to us and we jumped at the chance, so we came out here and recorded a new song for that split 7". I don't know what's happening with that label, there was no communication after we gave them the stuff. I've been talking to Ian and he's interested – I don't know if it's gonna work out, but we were seeing

my music. That's the real passion in my life. I have a lot of experience and I can help other bands get around.

MM: Sounds like you've got a busy time ahead musically...

Pete: You know I've been focussing on working for other bands for the last couple of years and trying to do other things on the side. It's tough but things come back around and opportunities present themselves and you have to go for it. It hasn't been for a lack of wanting to, it's just that sometimes other things get in the way.

MM: Anything to add?

Pete: I'm glad that you were interested in some of the other bands I was in – I thought this was going to be specifically about Goatsnake for some reason. Great to speak with you.

DUANE DENISON

Duane Denison isn't a household name for listeners of mainstream music. He hasn't started a monstrous music festival to stoke his ego. So far, he hasn't been awarded a lifetime achievement award from BET or VH1. So you may wonder, just what has he done. Why the hell am I mentioning him if he hasn't done anything? Well, he's done plenty, and it's all been amazing. It may just take a while for the world to catch up. I had the honor of sharing a stage with USSA who happens to be one of my favorite bands. As it happened, my band played the worst show of our short, mostly unnoticed career. Nobody in USSA was rude enough to tell us we sucked even though we certainly had. Instead they were really

pot for the world to enjoy! Of course, with Paul Barker (ex-Ministry), Johnny Rabb (ex-Hank III's band, Roland demo guy) and Gary Call (he's new to me too but he's freaking awesome!) there was no way to fail. As I learned at a now-deceased bar, these guys are even better live than they are on the CD.

I feel like I've been a bit long-winded here so I'll begin the interrogation now. Pop some popcorn, get a cold soda and place your ass into your favorite chair. It's time to begin.

Interview by Jim Dodge Jnr.



nice and easy to talk to. Duane Denison had a hernia that was nearly paralyzing him with pain and he still treated us like normal people. That was one of my favorite run-ins with musicians I admired. I came away from the experience a lot less disappointed than I would have any other time my band sucked ass on stage. These guys were just that cool. Mr. Denison, cool cat that he is, has graciously agreed to do an interview with me, for you, the Mass Movement reader. Let me tell you who he is, in case you are like all the other folks who haven't listened to much that wasn't played on popular rock radio. Duane's musical resume starts with a band I've heard of but only listened to after I met him, The Jesus Lizard. For ten years he and his band-mates made music their own way, to hell with the competition. During these years he played with two different acts, Denison-Kimball Trio and Firewater. Neither of these projects garnered much notoriety though his next group certainly did, and still does. This group is Tomahawk, most famous, perhaps, for front man Mike Patton of Faith No More. Tomahawk is experimental to the extreme. Ambient sounds, death metal, opera...it's all there and more. Without listening to their albums, you'll never be able to appreciate it. USSA, who I mentioned above, is my personal favorite of Duane's many amazing musical brain children. One of my good friends, Scott Bazar (also a musical genius/improviser/experimental musician) introduced me to USSA before their album, The Spoils, was released. I loved it! Minimalism, programming and good old rock music are all thrown into the

MM: Thanks for your time, Duane. I'm stoked to have a chance to dig into your personal life and learn more about what makes you tick! How are things since your hernia repair surgery? Have you considered hiring some roadies for your next tour?

DD: Hi Jim. Thanks for the props. I'm out on the road at the moment with the Legendary Shack Shakers (new album "Agridustrial") and am actually sitting backstage in Houston where we just opened for the Reverend Horton Heat....so I've got some time to kill and am happy to do this....so—Yeah, a road crew would be nice. I actually downsized my live rig a bit so there's no really heavy pieces. More modular now.

MM: I was kind of wondering when USSA might record a new album. Is there one in the works or are you focusing on other musical projects for now?

DD: There is another USSA album, I don't know who or how or when it will come out, but it's in the works. I actually collaborated a good bit with JD Wilkes and that's what the new LSS album (see above) is all about..and I've been writing some new stuff, maybe a new Tomahawk or a solo album..so we'll see...but the LSS gig has been my main thing for the last 2 years, and then I had a reunion tour last year with my old band (The Jesus Lizard) and that was a busy period for me....

MM: As I've mentioned, you play in Tomahawk with Mike Patton. Does

he suffer from 'Rock Star Ego' or is he more down to earth? Does it make it more stressful to play in a band with somebody who was relatively famous? Do you feel like you have to prove anything to him or the fans?

DD: Patton's a unique guy, very energetic, full of ideas...we all have egos or we wouldn't be doing this, at least not publicly, so I don't really consider him to be that different than a lot of other guys I know who play music for living.

MM: How do you feel your playing has evolved since your early days with The Jesus Lizard? Where would you like to take it in the future?

DD: I think I play better now than ever, if I may say so. I've worked with a fair amount of different folks, different situations, and I've developed new skills, I'm more loose, a better improviser, etc

MM: How many illegitimate love children would you estimate you have in the United States? Abroad? Are any of them in bands? If so, would you take them on tour?

DD: Ah, none I know of, and no, I'd never take them out on tour....

MM: I noticed when USSA played here in Panama City that your guitar stack looked to be about a hundred years old. How long have you toured with the same rig? How many rolls of duct tape are needed to keep it together after all that time?

DD: I was probably using my old Hi-watt rig. It's about 30 yrs old now, I usually just use it in the studio. I've got other stuff I like (Fender Super-sonic, VibroKing, Emperor Cabinets, etc) that I use more often now.

MM: Based strictly on musical chemistry, who is your favorite musician to jam with? Have there been any who you consider nearly impossible to accomplish anything with?

DD: I've probably had more pure enjoyment with Mac McNeilly (J.Liz drummer) than anyone.....but as far as difficult people, let's see....hmmm...

MM: What is your favorite flavor of ice cream? How many pets do you have? Do you prefer boxers or briefs?

DD: Ham, I like turtles, and a thong.

MM: So, for all the fine femme fatales who read this wonderful magazine I have the honor to work for are wondering, are you married? If so,

who's the lucky lady? How does she feel about your addiction to music?

DD: Uh, I'm married to my cousin, as per our aristocratic backgrounds. She likes the music addiction, it's the laudanum she doesn't like....

MM: Has your family always been supportive of your creative ventures? Are there any other musicians on your family tree?

DD: Kinda. They paid for lessons when I was a kid. I helped pay off their house after that!

MM: What would you consider to be the high point of your musical career to date? What was the low point?

DD: High point? I dunno, probably the Jesus Lizard getting popular, playing bigger places, getting on TV here and there.....low—that USSA tour—touring with a hernia was seriously a drag....

MM: What musician or band got you started on your lifelong pursuit of music? Who has kept you going, even through the tough times?

DD: Read my "self interview" at duanedenison.net.

MM: If you could change one thing about the music business, what would it be? Why do you think formulaic pop acts are still so marketable? Wouldn't you agree the world would be better off without N'Sync and Britney Spears?

DD: I would put a moratorium on all new music for a year or two...there's too much....I think pop stars are the gods of our times. They're the idols, the archetypes, the sacrificial martyrs that we worship and crave.....in endless supply, temporarily immortal, then disposable and recycled.....we need them, they need us....

MM: I promised to keep this interview short so I'll leave this off with one more question. When are you planning to tour through PC, FL again? We only seem to get shitty rap groups and tribute bands around here and could really do with some kickass rock!

DD: I was just in Tampa and Jacksonville.....

MM: Thanks, Duane! It's been nice to chat with you and I hope all things in your life are going well. Please, feel free to promote, promote, promote anything you want. We all need closure and good news is, of course, the best news. See ya buddy!

DD: Thanks Jim, see you soon.



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IT RUINED MY LIFE...

I'm Dan Zimmerman. Bass son! This past winter I took advantage of being Jewish. By that I mean I participated in a free trip to Israel made possible by an organization called taglit birthright Israel. They believe that Israel is an incredibly beautiful, amazing place that deserves to be seen (which it is indeed.) so my sister Sarah and I decided to apply for a trip online. You have to be Jewish, whether you're whole, half, or a quarter Jewish (which I think is quite unfair to non Jews, sorry Gentiles,) and between the age of 18 and 26. Since my sister's 27th birthday was approaching, and we wanted to go together, we needed to apply asap. So we went through the application process, picked a trip that fit our schedules, and boom! We're going to Israel for 10 days...for free!

My sister and I were never very close. Honestly, we really hadn't spent very much time together as siblings at all. We rarely even talked, not that we don't like each other; I guess we just didn't consciously have it on our agendas. So this trip to Israel seemed like a good way to bring us closer together.

The past year of my life has been a ridiculous whirlwind of girl drama (which I let affect me too much but what are you gonna do? That's just me.) I had been extremely depressed for a long time and my sister knew it. Sarah told me that she was there for me and that when I was ready to talk she wanted to listen. The first few days of the trip were kinda weird. There were 38 other participants and we had all just met each other. Between jet lag and travelling to what seemed like a million different places everyday starting at 7am and going until around 10pm, we were exhausted. When we had free time at the end of the day my sister would be so tired she would just go to bed, and I would stay up and drink. Basically at the time you could count on me to have a cigarette in my mouth and you could count on me being drunk (which doesn't exactly provide for intelligent conversation.) so nothing was different really. Yea my sister and I were both there, we went to the same places, but still we weren't spending "real time" together, which was essen-

tially the reason we went. I was drinking too much, talking to other people...ignoring everything entirely.

So one night at a bonfire, with most of the participants hanging out, I caught a glimpse of a girl sitting across from me on a bench on the other side of the fire. This girl was my very own sister. She looked quite upset. I sat down next to her and asked her if she was alright. She immediately started crying. She was upset that I wasn't talking to her, that I seemed to not care. I had been spending so much time talking to other friends I had made, so much time in my own head, that I didn't realize I had upset my sister. I knew my sister loved me, but I didn't realize that what I do would affect her in such a way. I wanted to share my life with her but; I didn't want to talk about my problems because it was exhausting.

But mainly I was just being stupid. I was ignoring a bigger problem. The problem of me not having a relationship with Sarah other than just having the same parents. So I sat down right then and there and talked to her. I told her about everything from girls to what was going on with my bands (I play in 'highlights' too.) I told her I loved her and that I was deeply sorry for acting so irresponsibly. I hugged her and it felt as though I had never really hugged my sister before. We promised each other that we would try our best to find time at least once a month to spend time together, to stay involved with each other's lives. And we've been doing our best to stick to that. My sister and I had been missing out on each other and that just plain sucks.

That trip to Israel really did change my life. I met amazing people, went to unbelievably amazing places, and I made friends that I now couldn't live without. It took ten days in another country for me to pay more attention to things that really matter, sounds lame but it's true. You gotta decide what's important to you, no matter what it may be. Some things seem more important than they are and some things are more important than they seem. I have a great relationship with the number one girl in my life, my sister Sarah. That's important to me.



DIRTY TACTICS

TESCO VEE

Jello Biafra, Ian MacKaye, Henry Rollins, HR, Joey Shithead, Glen Danzig... these are the names that people tend to think of when they refer to the halcyon days of hardcore in the early-mid 80s. Add to this list Tesco Vee; the outspoken and irreverent founder of Touch and Go, one of the most influential fanzines/record labels of all time, not to mention the creative force behind the Meatmen and the Hate Police. Time to pay your dues.

Interview by Ian Pickens

MM: OK just in case some cave dwelling ingrate like Osama is reading this; introduce yourself?

TV: Tesco Vee - The Dutch Hercules!!

MM: Along with Dave Stimpson, you set up one of the legendary independent fanzine/record labels in Touch and Go; are you surprised at the longevity of the 'label'?

TV: Indeed it lasted 30 years. The only label of its stature that strictly did handshake mano y mano deals with artists and that speaks volumes!

MM: Do you regret letting Cory Rusk (early bass player with the legendary Necros) take over the label?

TV: Hell no, I knew Corey would make us all proud. I probably would have kept the roster more musclehead and hardcore than he, but hey, I think history will look back and quote Don Cornelius from Soul Train 'It was a stone gas baby'. Cory had the monetary backing and interest in running a label. I was

too busy at the time trying to put food on the table and running the magazine...backing... and interest in... even having a record label was not gonna happen for me. My faves on the label from the post hardcore years would have to be Big Black, Didjits, and Man or Astroman.

MM: Were you aware during the late 80s/early 90s that that Kurt Cobain was desperately trying to get Nirvana signed to the label?

TV: Never heard that!

MM: Would you have signed him personally?

TV: Hmmm...no. But being a good businessman has never been my forte...not a fan. Dave Grohl was in Scream, one of DC's greatest bands, and for that I can forgive all his other musical crimes against man and nature!

MM: Will Cory ever allow re-release the Necros' back catalogue?

TV: He wants to but a certain someone doesn't want to as badly as I want it to come out. I gotta respect that person's decision.

MM: You started the Meatmen after the zine and later than some of your contemporaries like the Fix and the aforementioned Necros; why the late start?

TV: Christ never thought I was a late bloomer but perhaps I was...just jumped on the DIY bandwagon. There was such a crush of bands coming out you just kinda got swept up and felt compelled to do it too!

MM: Was the band simply an extension of the adolescent humour you were putting out through the zine?

TV: Pretty Much...Bands that made me laugh shaped the cockbag I am today and made me desire such nonsense be a part of The Meatmen, most notably inspirations would have to be Zappa and The Fugs in high school, Black Randy and The Metersquad's 'Pass The Dust I Think I'm Bowie' is a tour de force of levity laced tuneage..shame about the drug abuse..that guy ruled! Being labelled a 'Joke band' always seemed like a lame pigeon holin' copout..at least I wasn't another lame ass 'Ronnie

Reagan is an asswipe' proto politico punk rock combo!

MM: The Meatmen seemed to be extremely popular with more of the cooler HC bands in the early-mid 80s such as Adrenalin OD, White Flag and Minor Threat but never really seemed to gain a wider appeal; why do think that was the case?

TV: That's for others to deduce. We probably alienated the HC crowd when we started lampooning big rock noise in the mid 80's with 'War Of The Superbikes' and 'Rock N Roll Juggernaut', but alas made a bunch of new ones in the process. I always just played what I wanted and didn't care what everyone thought. But the main reason is as Handsome Dick Mantoba so aptly screamed on the first Dictators platter in his inimitable boffo big time wrestling delivery..'I could be baskin' in the sun in Florida, this is just a hobby for me! Nothin ya hear? Just a hobby! I wasn't livin' it and stealing choco bars and wearing clothes found behind the thrift shop like Black Flag or playing 300 shows a year..the band was always just a small facet of the man, along with vintage toy collecting, motorbike riding, etc

MM: Do you feel the Meatmen were overlooked because of the humour and un-PC lyrics in an increasingly codified scene?

TV: Hell I don't know or care! It was what it was, and it is what it is..cuz I ain't done yet..I'll still play any shithole that will have me as my recent West Coast tour embodied. People are like 'Tesco why did you play that dump in Hollywood? Why not the big bad club down the street?' Well ya know why fucknut? Cuz the big bad club wants

nothing to do with us so I get what I can get! It's a funny thing, but you have to get an offer from a club to play there dicknose! Lesser bands than us get the big shows but am I bitter? No! My fans will come, they are a loyal lot and for that I thank Satan eternally. We still put on the greatest Hades meets Las Vegas show. It's a SHOW...confetti cannons, props costumes. I lost \$5,000 doing it last year so the jerkwads who say I'm coming back to 'cash in' can suck my veined and bloated pork sword!

MM: The Meatmen and other notable Detroit acts had notoriously homophobic/misogynistic/misanthropic songs/lyrics; good clean fun or heartfelt sentiments?

TV: I really don't agree...I'm all tongue and cheek. OK sometimes I get serious, and I don't really see the other Michigan bands as such...I MAKE FUN OF EVERYONE! You ain't immune cuz you like it up the keister or have some other badge you wear on your sleeve.I've been called a racist but nothing could be further from the truth. I'm a live and let live card carrying Democrat who vehemently HATES Republicans and I would like to See Sarah Palin, Ann Coulter et al publicly stoned ala the Old Testament...If I come across like some right wing kook its simply because the world is a very target rich environment for my barbs and nobody is immune..NOBODY!

MM: Do you feel that bands like NoFX have carried the gauntlet?

TV: I've never listened to NOFX so I couldn't tell you

MM: Really? What are your current listening pleasures?

TV: My current listening pleasures? Nick Curran & The Lowlifes, Hellmouth, my Howlin Wolf Box set, all the Prog Rock box sets coming out of the UK like Pye, Deram, Harvest..Easy Action, Chapstik, the Las Vegas Grind series of 12" stripper music from the 50's, Abba!

MM: The 1981 Process of Elimination tour (with Meatmen, Necros and



Negative Approach) seems to have inspired a lot of people to get involved in the HC scene despite it being a relatively small tour...

TV: That's cool...I was inspired to do it by those that came before, and if I could pass that on, then righteous!

MM: Where did your art-noise combo Blight fit in with all this?

TV: It was kind of our little Midwestern nod to noise bands like Flipper. I would smear myself with day-glo paint and we'd have 48" black lights on stage and I'd write around like some drugged out art damage casualty. When we warmed up the Dead Kennedys in Detroit at the City Club the crowd was like WHAT THE???

MM: What prompted your decision to re-locate to Washington DC? You're still living there right?

TV: No I moved back to the great state of 1999. Moved to DC in 1982 to escape the 16% unemployment in Mich..then I heard tell the Republicans were coming and decided to skeedaddle back up the 'Mitten'. You can take the boy outta Michigan but...really it's a great state to be in a band. We have our legacy contributions like MC5, Stooges and all that, and it's just a great place to find players...plus we got lotsa fresh clean water up here so I expect once the Hurricanes coat all the Gulf Coast folks with light sweet crude they'll be hightailing it back up hear..thanks BP!

MM: I became aware of the Meatmen in around 1985/86 when Vinyl Solution started pushing 'War of The Superbikes' over here in the UK; how did that association come about?

TV: They musta been a distro.

MM: Yeah that's right, they were. At the time the album was referred to as a punk/metal hybrid; was this a deliberate attempt to cash in on the crossover scene at the time, irony; or simply a fusion of the hardcore and 70s rock you had followed prior to the development of hardcore? I understand you're a fan of 70's Welsh rockers Budgie?

TV: Budgie! Oh hell yeah. Still Love them!! My girlfriend embroidered the Budge 'In For The Kill' album cover on my jean jacket...no I wasn't cashing in, I have always been a fan of the heavy rock so I saw this as an opportunity to make fun of it! Plus I had Lyle and Brian from Minor Threat.2 of the greatest axe men from the Punk genre backing me up who were also fans of Iron Maiden and such...did you know Brian joined Santana on stage at Cobo Hall in Detroit when he was 14? Boy wonder on the guitar? True Story! we got SOOOO ripped off from Dutch east India on the Superbikes record. That thing probably sold a good 50,000..never saw a dime...

MM: Was the crossover of hardcore and metal the death knell for hardcore or simply its natural progression?

TV: Natch progression..it was bound to happen I think

MM: How did you feel about protégés such as the Necros development into more of a mainstream metal act in the mid 80s and Barry Hennsler's criminally underrated mix of hardcore/Detroit rock n soul Big Chief in the '90s?

TV: The 80's Necros were great as was Big Chief..Of course they are friends of mine so of course I'm gonna say that..

MM: What do you make of the modern crossover metalcore?

TV: Sorry no clue..I'm outta touch on that one.

MM: Both you, the Meatmen and the Detroit in general scene circa the early 80s were featured in Steven Blush' 'American Hardcore' book and film; do you think the project presented an accurate account of the HC scene during that time?

TV: You are destined to fail when you attempt such a feat as to document the whole country. He interviewed me for the book and contacted me to be in the movie but when he found out I had moved to Michigan he blew me off. Bad Brains were great and all but they got elevated to

deity status. I think there was a nano-second of Negative Approach and Necros, but no Effigies? Pagans??

MM: The book seemed to dwell on a lot of petty personal gripes; necessary or just a cheap attempt to settle some old scores? Do you think Blush over emphasized certain bands or scenes (such as SSD and Boston) at the expense of other notable bands and scenes such as Negative Approach and Detroit?

TV: Yes the book had a coastal focus at the expense of the hinterlands...but doing a comprehensive DVD on the whole country would have been a 5 volume set...

MM: You wrote the foreword to Tony Rettman's excellent account of the Detroit hardcore scene circa 1979-1985, 'Why Be Something Your Not', is this the definitive account of that scene?

TV: Yes! It's as close as we'll come..and it's a great read..he spent many hours in interviews including hours of watching many hours and Miller lights with John Brannon watching Alice Cooper videos..necessary if you want to get to the core of John Brannon!

MM: The missing chapter to American Hardcore to some extent?

TV: Yes since the Midwest did get such short shrift in American Hardcore Tony filled in the blanks nicely!

MM: I really liked the way that Rettman used the same protagonists throughout the book which gave it more of an intimate account of the scene (including some of the personal gripes) than Blush' work; do you agree?

TV: I guess personal gripes are part of it though wish after all these years it wasn't such a factor.

MM: Did you ever feel as if you were caught in some sort of limbo, being a teacher by day and having a guitar shoved up your bunghole fronting the Meatmen by night?

TV: Yes that was definitely worlds collide! I'm glad I am no longer teaching so I don't have to worry about that!

MM: You're back doing Tesco Vee's Hate Police right now? Have the Meatmen called it a day for good now for you to concentrate on TVHP or will their rear their ugly heads again?

TV: No I reserve the right to bring The Meatmen back at any time though it's just semantics. It's always yours truly and it's been that way since day one..don't get hung up on names. TVHP plays half a set worth of Meatmen classics anyway..so many hits..so little time!

MM: What's next for Tesco Vee?

TV: Pimping my new Touch and Go Book! Rockin the juke joint! Collecting more vintage toys! Got some? Drop me an e-mail? themeatmen(at)comcast.net

MM: Ah yes 'Touch and Go Fanzine - The Book'. A beefy read by all accounts? It's a compendium of all the issues of the zine from 79-83 right?

TV: Yes it's all 22 issues plus remembrances from Henry Rollins, Ian MacKaye, Corey Rusk, Keith Morris and more! Over 500 pages of Punk/indie history...all bias aside ya gotta have this! Available over there in talkfunnyland as well!

MM: Parting comments or cheap shots?

TV: Kill a Christian for Uncle Tesco! Listen to some ABBA! Stomp a conservative into the tarmac with your Doc Martens! Have a Bombay Sapphire on the rocks!! Go to my website tescoveee.com and buy some cool stuff! Wanna book me? Drop a mail to divideandconquerbooking(at)yahoo.com Maybe someday I can get over there to Europe and show you pecker-heads how it's really done! Hail Satan!



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60 Persons – Not Like You (Quite Great) CDEP

Never one to take a press release at face value, I snooped around online a bit to see if 60 Persons were truly as hotly tipped over in the UK as the label claims... and it seems to me that the press release may have understated things a bit. These kids have some die-hard fans, and it's not hard to see why. 60 Persons is a 5-piece alt-rock band from Glasgow, Scotland, with a sound that is certainly radio-accessible but not at all what I would consider radio-friendly. (Radio-friendly generally means 'torrid rubbish' in my world.) I'm reminded of a few off-kilter acts for which I have a definite affinity, such as The Walkmen and, in a subtle way, The Charlatans, with shades of Red Hot Chili Peppers (a band I don't actually like, but whatever). Hard to describe, but easy to like. These 3 songs have left me waiting for a full album. **The Impaler**

7Ray – Somewhere In A Scarlet Sky (7Hard/H'ART/G.A.S.) CD

What an oddly continental stack of reviews for The Impaler this go-round! 2 seconds into this record and I started to believe that I was in an Ibiza rock club in 1989. If you've ever wondered what it would sound like to mix massive AOR (think: anything with Jeff Scott Soto singing), that big 80s alt-UK sound (think: Depeche Mode), and fully European disco that typically isn't even allowed to cross over the borders of the EU (think: Cascada)... this is pretty much it. The songs are catchy, everything is layered 100 times over then layered again, several songs feature that wacky vocoder thing on all the vocals, and I don't believe there is an actual instrument being played by an actual person anywhere on the record. Vacationers fuelled by ecstasy and fruity adult beverages could possibly think this is the greatest thing ever while dancing up a frenzy on the beach while on holiday... but I guarantee they'll hate themselves for buying a copy by the time they get back home. **The Impaler**

Aaron Carey - 6 String Master (Periphery Records) CD Single

It says in the press release that this guy has performed on stage with OPM (Heaven is a Halfpipe) - so what!?! He may be a talented all round musician and able to play a large range of instruments but he can't write a good tune for shit!! **Paul Hoddy**

Abadden - Sentenced To Death (Rising) CD

Dunstable doesn't exactly have the same ring as 'the Bay Area' now does it? But these young thrashers are out to prove that it isn't where you're from, it's where you're at musically that counts, and right now, Abadden are on the crest of a wave. The thrash revival (can we still call it a 'revival' over five years down the line? Probably not!) opened the door for a lot of young talented UK metal bands, and these guys are snapping rabidly at the heels of Evile, SSS and Gama Bomb. They actually won some sort of Battle-of-the-Bands competition to get their album deal with Rising, which all sounds a bit bizarre and 'Pop Idol' for the metal scene, but as soon as you slap this on, you know Abadden are a million miles away from being a manufactured boy group, haha! This is ferociously fast and tight, kinda old school in its delivery but with a modern edge to its sound, and the song-writing is scarily confident for such a young band; it isn't original by a long stretch of the imagination, but when a band are this damn good at building on the awesome foundations laid by the likes of Slayer, Exodus, Vio-lence, Dark Angel and Metallica, who's complaining? **Ian Glasper**

Abscess / Population Reduction – Split (Tankcrimes) CD

Respected stalwarts of the Death Metal scene, this brings Oakland's Abscess and their two Autopsy members together in a split CD with fellow Californians Population Reduction. In underground grind circles this may be something to cheer and no doubt both bands would go down well at the Czech Republic's Obscene Extreme Festival, but sonically this is pretty standard death metal grind. Abscess have a little more fuzz to their old school death metal, with a side of punky, almost D-beat drumming and some scratchy noise soloing, but it's nothing we haven't heard before. Population Reduction

have a newer school, lower register vocal style with a tighter and more processed guitar and drum production. Kinda reminds me of a more condensed Brujeria. Again, it's standard grind fare though with the odd bit of variety such as the crossover (think Cro-Mags/M.O.D) flavoured In With The Old and some funny interludes. A full PR album might be rather an interesting prospect and I bet they're a blast live. I'm not sure if this split is essential for grindheads, or more of the same, but at 29 minutes total, I like it and it's good, but I can't say I'll reach for it on a long term basis. **Chest Rockwell**

Affordable Hybird - No Area, No Criminals (Black Star Foundation) CD

Amy: I am not sure what to think of this. It is good, but odd. The instruments and voices are very clear. The mixing is good. **Amy Dodge**

A Hope For Home – Realis (Facedown) CD

I almost hate these guys. 'Nightfall', the opening track, tries to ease my troubled soul and take it to a better, more tranquil place. At the same time as the doors to my personal eden are about to open, an avalanche of dry and harsh riffs come crashing down on me. I'm violently thrown back down to an earth where desperation seems to rule supreme. Or does it? The band maintains an interesting tension between killer metal and heavenly melodies and you just never know where they're going, but they've also made sure their songs aren't torn apart by the chaos that walks hand in hand with this kind of metal. There's an intelligent unity which fuses everything and holds the songs together. There's an almost ISIS feeling going on under the thick layers of desperate screams, weeping guitars, and laid back keyboards. Not an easy record, but one you'll grow to love if you give it a chance. **Martijn Welzen**

Aldaaron - Nous Reviendrons Immortels (Paragon Records) CD

Birthered near the French Alps in 2004, Aldaaron make a convincing Black Metal racket in the mould of Immortal, mainly. For a debut album though, this is an accomplished piece of work, expertly and melodically blasting almost throughout, in that old school Norwegian way. There are snippets of folk arrangements during fifth track Nirnaeth Arnoediad (Part 2) but make no mistake - this is Black Metal. The vocals are of the harsh Black Metal style, and if you don't like them, you won't like this, because they're all over this album. Personally the music is mostly interesting enough to overcome most moments of 'er, mate?', but the constant rasping sometimes does get a little too much. Despite the generally perfect delivery, there's nothing out of the ordinary here... the similarities between this and Black Metal lampooners Impaled Northern Moon Forest are too close for comfort and therein lies the rub. If you like, nay love, this stuff, then Aldaaron will be right up your street. If not, then you'd be well advised to visit a friend and hope they're gone by the time you get home. **Chest Rockwell**

All For Nothing – Miles And Memories(GSR) CD

On the violent side of Comeback Kid, and it's entirely up to you whether that's the left or right, there's this Dutch band, All For Nothing. 'Can't Kill What's Inside' caught my attention, and the mess that once was my room, is a silent reminder of that. 'Miles And Memories' are a step forwards. The songs stay balanced, even at high speed, although I do think singer Cindy puts too much effort into making her vocals sounding loud and harsh. It's all a bit too forced, almost as if she needs, and is trying, to out scream the guitars. Live this is going to be a blast, but I'm not sure whether this CD will stand the test of time. It's good fun for now though and that's what's most important...**Martijn Welzen**

Annihilator – Annihilator (Earache) CD

The thought of denying Annihilator a 10/10 seems like a guarantee of never getting in to Metal Heaven, but the fact is that since the debut and arguably their more melodic sophomore release, they haven't really hit those heights. Albums have been reliably churned out and there is no doubting the skill and general awesomeness of Jeff Waters, but the music seems to be a little too

release seems to have a good balance of a 'bit of everything', covering the classic styles of the first two albums and a smattering of the sonic favoured in the current climate such as some overly melodic choruses. I would go so far as to say that Waters guitar work here is superlative in every sense, the thrash guitar is insane, the solos amazing and the general choppiness being just what the Metal doctor ordered. However, Dave Padden offers a worthy and competent vocal foil, but although he balances bite and melody it's more of the Lamb of God variety than a real commanding presence of the likes of Phil Anselmo. The lyrical themes of personal revenge and betrayal sound a little clichéd and the music tends to be a little too slick and that pedestrianism remains. It is all generally familiar territory. Having seen Annihilator back in 1990 with Judas Priest, perhaps it's just my preference for the past or for the heavier end of the Metal spectrum, but I would still urge anyone into near perfect thrash guitar with a melodic veneer to check this out. **Chest Rockwell**



A.N.S. – Pressure Cracks (Tankcrimes) CD

A.N.S. hail from Denton, Texas. A.N.S. can basically be categorized as skate-punk or as crossover hardcore. A.N.S. like to party. Oh, and A.N.S. will fucking DESTROY your weak suburban ass. I was lucky enough to catch these boys live here in Austin last summer, as the special guests on an awe-inspiring show featuring my longtime heroes JFA in the headline slot. I have no idea if they are heading to the UK or Europe in support of this album, but if they do, and you call yourself hardcore, do NOT miss the opportunity to mix it up with A.N.S. Even though you're likely to wake up the next day missing a few teeth. Small price to pay, I assure you. For those who've never heard this band, play around with this concept: DRI, Dr. Know, Scared Straight, PTL Klub, The Boneless Ones, JFA, Crumbsuckers, and 3 or 4 of your other favorite bands in this general area of musical brutality have been captured by, I don't know, evil time-traveling robots from space or some shit... all the fury of the 25 best HC/crossover/skatecore bands ever is distilled into a powerful elixir that is given to the dudes in A.N.S., who proceed to cause the absolute destruction of the universe with the recording of 9 songs that they sequence together and call 'Pressure Cracks'. Buy this now, or quit wasting everyone's time and get a subscription to some other half-baked fanzine, alright?!? **The Impaler**

Anthrax – Among The Living (Deluxe Edition) (Megaforce / Island) CD/DVD

This is what makes life worthwhile. 80s classics getting a well-deserved reissue. 'Among The Living' is treated like a rare, beautiful artefact from the heyday of thrashmetal, which it actually is, come to think of it. And now Anthrax's best album lies here before me in all its splendour while one of the amazing songs on the album is spitting out its 23 years old riffs in the background. Oh how familiar they are, and, oh, how cool and relevant they are in this day and age. Just as with 'Reign in Blood' or 'Peace Sells...', you're not a metal head if you don't own it. This is the perfect time for all the young kids who're now diving into the rich past of our beloved genre to pick this beauty up. Not only do you get the 9 original ATL songs, but 6 additional tracks which are songs with so-called alternate take, and rare and live tracks. On top of that there's the 'Oidivnikufesin' video for the first time on a DVD. Shortly after the release of ATL, Anthrax embarked on what would become their most legendary tour. London had the privilege of hosting the furious 12-song performance. The best tracks from the, at the time new, album are mixed with older classics from this NY legend. A must-have won't cover it this time around, this is a must-embrace-and-never-let-go. **Martijn Welzen**

Anthrax – Caught In A Mosh (BBC Live In Concert) (Universal-Island) 2xCD

I'm really, really questioning the relevance of this double live CD by the almighty Anthrax. Two British live shows, one at the Hammersmith Odeon in London and one at the Donington Festival, were recorded by Britain's biggest broadcaster in 1987. 'Caught In A Mosh' was supposed to come out in 2007, at least that's what it says on the artwork, which would have marked the twentieth anniversary, but they kept it in the vaults for nearly three more years. The reason is obvious, it's a CD of bootleg quality at best, so the label must have had some doubts about releasing it. Absolutely great for people who were at one, or maybe both, of these shows, and fair's fair the recording of the Donington show sounds alot better than the average bootleg. The band also delivered an amazing high energy performance on both dates, and the well-known songs from 'Spreading the Disease' and 'Among the Living' are worth listening to and come across really well. However it really is just for collectors and not really a great representation of Anthrax at their best, doing

what they do best....**Martijn Welzen**

Arma Gathas – Dead To This World (Metal Blade Records) CD

In 2006 Simon Fülleman, who paid his dues in Cataract, among others, had the idea of forming a new band. For some reason Simon couldn't get a consistent sound that would generate and bring to life the anger he envisioned. It wasn't until 2009 when former Born From Pain shouter Ché came into the fold that things started to happen. And knowing his BFP past you will know, he's one of the best metalcore singers in Europe. Possibly this continent's answer to Hatebreed's Jasta! So after a collision of these major forces in metal, the creation and birth of debut CD didn't take long. 'Dead To This World' blends that dry, straight up metalcore sound that all of the bands mentioned earlier in this review are well know for, with something extra. That extra being a huge slab of Pantera and Machine Head. That absolutely tight groove that both bands are known for. That groove Throwdown used to have before their sound when sour. Pure anger, pure sadness and amazing production more than do the trick. **Martijn Welzen**

A Torn Mind – Barriers (A Torn Mind Records) CD

Scottish rockers A Torn Mind certainly don't take any shortcuts when it comes to crafting their compositions. "Barriers", their first full-length offering, is avowedly prog rock – to the point where they happily include some of the same aspects which led to prog first experiencing a backlash and later even ridicule, such as parping keyboards and sometimes overly earnest vocals. For all that, you don't need to be a purist to realise that there are also a lot of reasons to applaud them; not least the excellent job they have done on the production (done by the band themselves in admirably DIY fashion). They earn additional kudos for frequently excellent playing (including some brilliant woodwind sections), effective arrangements and a maturity and sense of accomplishment to their songwriting that suggests they have a very bright future indeed – if not at the top of the charts, certainly mopping up some of the deeply fanatical Marillion followers once those lumbering monsters shudder to a halt. Comparisons with the Mars Volta are mostly nonsensical, but you can hear oodles of Dream Theater, Rush et al in here, along a heavier edge gleaned from the noodlier edges of the last ten years of the metal scene. "Barriers" won't appeal to everyone, but those seeking genuine new contenders in the field of progressive rock should be in raptures over A Torn Mind. **Eddie Thomas**

Attentat Sonore – Syndrome De Stockholm (Guerilla Vinyl) CD

Welcome return of these French punk veterans. 13 tracks of mid paced street punk reminiscent of the Partisans, injected with a shot of 80s US Hardcore ala early Agnostic Front/ Negative Approach, and the kind of male/female trade-off vocals usually associated with anarcho bands (Nausea, Dirt etc). Personal/political lyrics which are obviously as important to the band as the music itself. It's great to see this kind of passion and commitment to the core DIY values that used to permeate the punk/HC scenes. Well worth checking out if you are craving a dose of old school punk rock, and a break from the overwhelming amount of metalcore, pop punk and ska core currently swamping the scene. It's also nice to hear a band sing in their native tongue with almost half the songs sung in French. C'est tres bien. **Ian Pickens**

Battalion - Underdogs (Silverwolf Productions) CD

Again, I've become addicted to a thrash record. I feel like I'm 17 again playing 'Underdogs', which makes me foam at the mouth and makes me want to destroy everything in sight. Even my one year old daughter is starting to frantically throw around her beloved toys. Tinky Winky in a moshpit fellow metalheads. It's just that insane. The first two songs, 'Thrash Maniacs' and 'Headbangers' emphasize the lethality of this lot. It's an excellent 21st century interpretation of what 'Ride The Lightning' would sound like if UK metal Gods Evile played it back to front. Add to that a bit of a German accent, borrowed from Teutonic thrash masters Sodom and you get the all Swiss band, Battalion. Barely in their twenties this four piece is already bloody amazing. Good clean thrash for all ages. A mother's day must have... **Martijn Welzen**

Beat The Red Light – Beat The Red Light (TNS Records) CD

Slayer vs. The Slackers? This starts to send alarm bells off in my mind. I really like Slayer but cant stand The Slackers. However, as soon as the first track never a dull moment kicks in all my worries about this band go away.

Bursting straight into some brutal, heavy guitars and drums I can see where this band gets the slayer comparison from. Then all of a sudden the horns kick in and...it fits. I mean it really fits. It's like Capdown if they wore Cannibal Corpse shirts and bracelets with spikes on them so long they went into next week. This theme continues all the way through the EP and it makes for amazing listening. This CD is both heavy enough for metal fans to get stoked on yet there are enough upstroke guitars and horns for any rude boy to get his skank on which, in this day and age of further splits between genres and fans is quite an achievement. **BT**



Bill Bondsmen – Disaster Prone (Local Cross) 7"

Something of a departure from BBs earlier classic mid western HC style, and a definite progression; but don't expect any misguided forays into metal as was the trend for most HC bands as they 'matured' as musicians. No, this is the sound of a band that carries their personal demons on their shoulders, but is learning to come to terms with them. While many of the traditional elements of the band remain; searing, vitriolic vocals, off kilter bass lines, sparse drumming and eerie guitar patterns which all add to the feeling of bitter cynicism and isolation created by the lyrics, the band are definitely pushing the boundaries. B side '36th' is probably my favourite of the two tracks on offer, falling somewhere between the empty despair of Dead Kennedy's 'This Could Be Anywhere' and early Southern Death Cult/Killing Joke post punk. Essential for those people interested enough to discover the real sound of the underground and not the latest punk trend. **Ian Pickens**

Black Breath – Heavy Breathing (Southern Lord)

2009's Razor to Oblivion was a powerful opening shot from Black Breath and thankfully the band's first full length fulfils the promise shown on that EP. The ghosts of Entombed and Dismember still figure in the background with opening track 'Black Sin (Spit on the Cross)' vocally and musically capturing the vibrancy and tone of the Swedish legends. There's also a passing resemblance to Boston noiseniks the Doomriders and their fusion of seriously heavy vibes and hardcore energy, although Heavy Breathing draws more on BBs Death Metal elements than their earlier hardcore influences with songs like 'Escape from Death' sounding not unlike 'Scream Bloody Gore' era Shuldiner & co. The instrumental title track resonates with hooks aplenty and highlights the bands ability to write and play a more classic style of metal. The band go one step further on 'Unholy Virgin' and trot out some whiskey soaked barroom blues tinged metal, albeit with glass gargled vocals. A superb debut which looks highly likely to be my album of the year. **Ian Pickens**

Black Candy Store – Back To The Wall (7Hard/Cargo) CD

Where? How? What?!? Black Candy Store is AMAZING. Amazing. Period. 'Back To The Wall' is INCREDIBLE. Seriously. Fantastic. Wow.... If you are old enough to remember the time when Soundgarden were pure, when Stone Temple Pilots was that new band that no one out in the big bad world had heard of yet but you and your buddy liked a lot after seeing the video on late-night MTV, when Pearl Jam made ROCK albums with ROCK VOCALS, when I Mother Earth was making all of Canada (and this odd non-Canadian) shudder with joy, when Catherine Wheel showed up and proved that the Brits could do it just as well as the dudes from Seattle, you owe it to yourself to find this record. Now. The crazy thing here is that Black Candy Store are a bunch of kids! The crazier thing here is that Black Candy Store are from a small town in France! Don't misunderstand: I'm fully down with the kids and down with the French, and no mistake; but I've never before heard anything like this from such a young group or from a French band. Man, if Weiland hears this he's gonna be pissed, because this cat Arno is pulling off Weilandisms (in his own, unique style) that Weiland hasn't been able to come close to in years. Years! You've got to hear it to believe it. **The Impaler**

Blasphemous – Bearer Of the Darkest Plagues (Baars) CD

Can I have a glass of water please? Blasphemous' black metal is an unnatural drought created in the shape of music. It's a Sahara of evil. Continuously pounding your senses and draining you of every drop of water and the will to live. Even though, for the main part, this American band are pure, uncut black metal of the old school variety, there are some interesting bits that caught my attention. Death metal grooves and tiny thrash parts. It's the sloppiness, that wasn't uncommon with the first true black bands, that turned me off, and that's mostly due to the drummer who misses more beats than a failing heart. It dry, and its lack of consistency makes it a hard pill to swallow.

Or maybe it's meant as a suppository? In which case, I'm fucked. **Martijn Welzen**

BloodTrial – Die Or Drown (Chung King) MCD

Talking about taking major steps forward. Dutch band BloodTrial are now, compared to the band they were on the split CD with fellow countrymen Rising Tide, an entirely different group, or so it seems. That has nothing to do with the drastic line-up changes that happened. Nor has it to do with the guys thinking they should walk a different musical path, which they haven't. The music is still as

harsh and in your face as it always was. The key word here is confidence! Singer Bart misses a beat here and there, but that just adds to the furious anger, and believe me, he knows what anger and aggression mean. Guitar player Arie dares to add some tiny details piercing through the thundering foundation of newcomers Lukas (drums) and Yoni (bass). I'm amazed by the growth Lukas has made, especially when comparing these new songs and his current live performance with the first shows he played three years ago. Again, it's more like an MCD, with just 6 tracks, but with the sound they now have, it's time for a skull crushing debut full length. **Martijn Welzen**

Boys With X-Ray Eyes—Oh My! How We Terrify (Escape Artist Management) CD

Jim: Reminds me of some early '80s hard core.

Amy: Me too. That never was my cup of tea, but they are not bad for what they are.

Jim: It would definitely be fun to blare this during Spring Break in the midst of all the teeny-bopper-booty-thumping crap.

Amy: Now you're speaking my language. Tourists go home!

Jim: It's pretty stripped down, it's angry, and it's kind of heavy—what I call a winning combination. I think that's all I have to say besides, "I like it."

Note: The reviewers live in Panama City, Florida, USA....just miles from Panama City Beach. They are inundated with dumb, drunken, inconsiderate tourists much of the year. **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

Brian Jonestown Massacre – Who Killed Sgt. Pepper? (A/Cargo) CD

Here's a band that is talked about, written about, name-dropped, and other referenced in hipster circles even more than recipes for vegan burritos and trustworthy spots to score psychedelics. Funny how I've managed to go 15 years without actually hearing even one of their albums, then, innit? So, with no true background to go on, I popped this one in to get educated on the BJM. I'm reminded immediately of 2 bands that were fairly underground for their entire careers, Tripping Daisy and Love & Rockets. That's a good thing, for those keeping score. These cats, operating here in the 21st Century, throw some modern hip-hop beats and other keeping-it-current-for-the-kids references into the mix, but the gist of the party seems to be chunky, distorted guitar riffs, buried male and female vocals, and odd instrumentation as distractions to the ever-shifting psychedelic soundscapes—like Mercury Rev, in a way, but without that band's amazing and always-there vocals. Interesting, to say the least. **The Impaler**

Bulldog Courage – From Heartache To Hatred (WTF) CD

No matter how tough you think you are, each and every one of us has feelings. We all know bands like Sheer Terror and Blood For Blood, who, on the surface might just be out for a drink and a fight. Deep down though, when you read their lyrics, you know the hurt. Loves lost, deaths in the family, unemployment, drug abuse... you name it they've probably experienced it. You can't fake that feeling. Bulldog Courage are as real as they come, clinging to their friends and neighbourhood, working low-paid jobs, just to survive in this crappy human rat race. This is hardcore from the streets. Hard, ugly dangerous and without any compromise. They might be down, but they're never out. An unstoppable force. **Martijn Welzen**

Caesars Rome – The Company We Keep (Superball Music) CD

Where many modern rock or emo bands sometimes surprise you with some strange hooks, like Jimmy Eat World or Thrice, Caesars Rome are much more straight forward. The lack of surprises do make the band slightly less original, but on a commercial level, these guys have high potential. The vocals are stretched too thin with some songs, and that might create a sense of boredom with some of the more hyper-active kids that are part of the scene today, but personally I think this is a nice break from all the neckbreaking metal that usually pounds my ears and I enjoyed it. Not so much an adventure, as a nice stroll round the block....**Martijn Welzen**

Campus – Oh, Comely! (Funtime) CD

The artwork of 'Oh, Comely' reminds me of 'OX' by the almighty Coalesce. It's making me curious about whether or not it's a subliminal message for the American band. One thing is certain however, 'Oh, Comely!' is heavier than its older brother 'We Are The Silence' (2008). It's hard hitting, rather noisy hardcore, which shares some twists with Coalesce, although its much less metallic. Where are these Belgian taking their influences from? Apparently from a wide range of bands, far too diverse to mention, all of which, when added together, create a sound completely built from Campus DNA. The clean vocals have taken a step back to give Campus an angrier outlook on life. And it fits them. 'Oh, Comely!' is a soul searching record filled with anger and desperation where sparks of hope light up like meteors in a pitch black night. **Martijn Welzen**



Castrovalva – We Are A Unit (Brew) CD

Leeds is an exciting place for new music and the scene is currently thriving with the success of local bands like That Fucking Tank, Pulled Apart By Horses and Chickenhawk, and Brew Records seem to be in the middle of it all with their fingers well and truly on the pulse. The label and some of the emerging bands are embracing the DIY ethos and in the current climate this is entirely important and highly commendable. Brew's latest release by Castrovalva, We Are A Unit, is an interesting one, certainly something my sixteen year old self would probably like. Their sound seems to be borrowed from many different bands; Scratch Acid's heavy basslines come to mind and the vocals are to me reminiscent of Blood Brothers (sometimes with effects). There is also undeniable pop overtones at work here, particularly apparent in the production. Unfortunately, though many of the songs on this album begin with promising, driving riffs or super heavy bass but they often lead nowhere or get tangled in a directionless sound. It is a shame but still there is potential for this band and for a younger audience in particular I think they could become local legends. This one, though, is just not for me. **Lauren Barley**

Ceremony – Rohnert Park LP (Bridge Nine Records) LP/CD/Download-

I'm a big fan of everything Ceremony have done up to this point. I love the anger of the demo and Violence Violence. I thought Scared People and Still Nothing Moves You were incredible. With Rohnert Park the band will definitely turn the heads of everyone who previously didn't like them. Rohnert Park sounds like it could've been recorded in the early 80s. The music, recording, lyrics all sound like they come from that Black Flag/Circle Jerks era. Opening track 'Sick' is fucking AMAZING. Seriously one of the best hardcore songs you'll hear all decade. Ceremony have moved away from their tried and tested 'blast-beat, slow part, blast-beat' formula and written some great, angry hardcore tunes. My favourite record so far this year. **Leigh**

Chains of Hate – Cold Harsh Reality (Ruction) MCD

When you're more than a bit familiar with hardcore you'll be totally excited when you hear the intro to Chains of Hate. The slow build up of tension that can only lead to total musical devastation. 'Scars of Life' is violent proof of that. This Cardiff based band have obviously been listening to Madball who seem to be a major influence, but they also have groove of bands like Knuckledust or Backfire!. It's pure, powerful, metallic and raw UKHC. The way we like our music. Not world-changing by any means, but, with good production and songs that'll bite your head off, it's still a keeper. **Martijn Welzen**

Chimp Spanner – At The Dreams Edge (Basick Records) CD

This record is very different. All instrumental, played and produced by one man and a very kind of spaced out feel to it. It's a very prog metal sounding album as well. It could easily be something that one of Dream Theatre had knocked up in a spare few hours. It's a page straight out of the Japanese culture of epic video game music. This record is one of the most confusing records I've heard in ages. Why would you make an album which is basically 13 tracks of instrumental music? More to the point one which sounds like it's for films or video games and then have a label release it? Is there a market for this kind of thing that would need a consumer release? Maybe it's to help it get noticed by games developers and film makers. Who knows but if you're into your Metal Gear Solids and the like then this is right up your street. **BT**

Chris T-T – Nintendo (Xtra Mile Recordings) CD

Chris T-T is one of those artists I keep stumbling across – his album "99 Red Songs" was witty and enjoyable, then I happened across him on a couple of festival bills here and there. Though I wouldn't call myself a huge fan of his I certainly appreciate what he does. So while discovering a Chris T-T CD in

my review package was a plus, my sense of intense joy was tempered slightly with the discovery that it only contains one track from his forthcoming album, "Love Is Not Rescue". So while it would have been nice to be telling you how his songwriting has matured (or otherwise) since his debut, I have but a single song to pass critical judgement upon. Still, it is a good one – a melodious piano-driven lighters-in-the-air number that suggests, if it is typical of the quality of his new record, he has taken significant strides forward since I had him pegged as a wry guy with a decent guitar style and a marginally unhealthy interest in Billy Bragg. That said, when he's banging on about Nintendos at the end are a bit off-putting. Anyway, if the point of only giving me the one track was to make me keener to hear the album, job done and then some. **Eddie Thomas**

Comeback Kid – Symptoms and Cures (Victory) CD

The longer this band exists the more anger they pour into their music. Instead of the, rather friendly, sing-along type of hardcore they are biting now your head off. Clean off without any regrets! 'Do Yourself a Favor' kicks in like a fresh shot of adrenaline. From 'Crooked Floors' onwards things seem to be calming down and you can hear a bit of the old Comeback Kid shining through. I'm not sure if this 'hardcore-to-the-bone' approach really fits the band. I always loved their more Good Riddance sort of approach, which was a lot friendlier. Still, the angry Comeback Kid still knows how to write a good tune and get the masses going with sheer madness. It only takes a bit of time getting used to. **Martijn Welzen**

Crazy Arm – Still To Keep (Xtra Mile Recordings) CD

What is it with those skinflints at Xtra Mile? It REALLY helps me form a coherent opinion of a band when I can hear more than one track, you know. Well, "Still To Keep", from Crazy Arm's new album "Born To Ruin", is a well-constructed slice of clever, multi-layered but also quite commercial rock. To their great credit, they pull off the increasingly difficult feat of not sounding like anyone in particular. I suppose they are in the same general region as someone like Biffy Clyro but have a touch of Muse about them too. Ultimately, though, they do have enough individuality about this track to suggest that they sound first and foremost like themselves. Which, in their case, is a Very Good Thing. Those pesky Xtra Mile kids, eh – tightwads for sure, but at least they have good taste... **Eddie Thomas**

Depressor – Book of the Dead (TankCrimes) 2 x 7"

Quite possibly the most impressive packaging I have ever seen. Gatefold outer sleeve, inner sleeves with lyrics and graphics, red vinyl, a 34 page booklet of Occult/Demonology/Necromancy which seriously has to be seen to be believed; really I cannot emphasize how impressive this is. The booklet has genuine candle wax, line drawings, occult ciphers, and has been 'aged' to appear as a medieval grimoire – a record collector's wet dream. But what of the music I hear you ask? Well there are 6 tracks of blackened crustcore with grind overtones, think Amebix, Deviated Instinct and Repulsion. Not exactly original but more than competently handled with 'Adversary' and 'Utturu' packing the biggest punches. There are only 666 of these bad boys in existence so get over to TankCrimes right now. Who cares if Record Collectors are Pretentious Assholes? **Ian Pickens**

Dirty Harry - God Shaped Hole (Dirty World Records) CD

I'll be upfront here, I HATE ONE SONG PROMOS! How can I honestly review a band based off one song? I can't, so I'll review the song. The singer sounds similar to the girl in The Sounds from Sweden with a little Debby Harry in there, the music is basic mid-paced rock and could probably get radio play on some Alt-friendly radio station like KROQ here in California. But, there's no hook, no substance, just a 3 minute "rock" song. The band's photos conjure up a Blondie meets Motley Crue. I am just not excited by this, but I can't honestly say it's a fair judgment when I only got to hear one song..... **Jethrobot**

D.O.A. – Talk-Action=0 (Sudden Death/MVD Audio) CD

30-some years after the young Joey Shithead gathered some likeminded knuckleheads together to fight the system with punk rock noise, the older/wiser/still-angry Joe Keithley (hey, we've all gotta grow up at least a little bit, right!?) roars back with the 13th all-new studio release under the D.O.A. banner. The current rhythm section (Floor Tom Jones on drums, Dirty Dan Sedan on bass) is tight. The riffs are there. The lyrics are, in a word, punk. Mostly. My initial reaction to 'Talk (Minus) Action (Equals) Zero' (I spelled it out for you, just in case someone didn't quite get it) is that I like it

better than the last couple of records—there is definitely a focus on straight-ahead punk here, as opposed to the ska and radio-rock influences found on ‘Northern Avenger,’ for example. ‘That’s Why I Am An Atheist’ kicks off the album in classic fashion, and is my favorite song here. Strengths play on strengths as ‘Rebel Kind’ and ‘They Hate Punk Rock’ and ‘I Live In A Car’ come crashing out, one after the other. Several songs, starting with ‘The R.C.M.P.’ (you know, the Mounties!), sound heavily influenced by the Sex Pistols for some reason. There are some oddball moments, like a Bob Dylan cover done partly in snotty-punk fashion and partly in loving tribute, a cover of an old crooner song that should sound familiar to most listeners, and a crazy track about classic ‘Star Trek’—and they all work... quite well in fact. Final verdict: don’t count out D.O.A. They’re still out there, and they’re still relevant. **The Impaler**



Dog Tooth Violet - Self Titled (Brightside Records) CD

Amy: Boring radio rock with a hint of whiny emo vocals.

Jim: This kind of reminds me of old Pearl Jam. The voice isn’t quite right, but close.

Amy: Wow! Our opinions are quite different here. I was thinking more like Porno for Pyros or a slightly heavier Radiohead.

Jim: It definitely has that old Seattle sound to me, modern grunge.

Amy: Some things had their time and place, and it is now gone.

Jim: While I respect your opinion, I gotta say I like this one.

Amy: Good for you. Ugh! Make it stop, please. Kurt Cobain is spinning in his grave.

Jim: Okay, okay, I’ll listen to it by myself later. **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

Dropkick Murphys – Live on Lansdowne, Boston MA (Cooking Vinyl) CD/DVD

Recorded over 6 nights in March 2009 (finishing of course on St Patrick’s Day), the DKMs run through twenty tracks of their trademark Irish flavoured punk. The band seem a long way from the harder street punk sounding songs of their ‘Do or Die’/‘Gangs All Here’ days, and this release is more a celebration of their Boston/ Irish (and Al Barr’s Scottish) roots than a live greatest hits package with rousing versions of ‘Johnny I Hardly Knew Ya’, ‘The State of Massachusetts’, ‘Fields of Athenry’, ‘The Dirty Glass’, old favourite ‘Caught in a Jar’ and ‘I’m Shipping Up To Boston’ with the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. The live DVD reprises the same set as the CD with the welcome addition of ‘Cadence to Arms’ and ‘Do or Die’ and to be honest is the reason you should pick this up. The band is obviously enjoying themselves as much as the crowd. The quality of the footage is tremendous and shows how far the Murphys have progressed in terms of live performance. Of course if you find the whole concept of Americans celebrating Irish culture (which includes the Forbes school of Irish dance and a set which resembles a church) ridiculous then this will make you bristle with indignation. As for me – well suffice to say I’ll raise a Guinness to the Boston Scallys. **Ian Pickens**

Dropkick Murphys – Live On Lansdowne, Boston MA (Cooking Vinyl) CD/DVD

Now this is what I’m talking about – a great live album from one of the best live bands of their type. The Murphys have been at this game for a good few years now, and have developed into a fearsomely good band as they have simultaneously pioneered a brilliantly simple but highly effective sound. “Live On Lansdowne...” features no less than 20 tracks recorded live at their now-traditional St. Patrick’s Day shows in their native Boston, including classics like “Flannigan’s Ball” and “Bastards On Parade”, alongside their takes on the old Irish rebel song “Fields Of Athenry” and Geordie folkster Ed Pickfords “Workers Song”. As you’d expect, the energy levels rarely dip below frenetic, and this, in combination with the stirring, soaring melodies of the songs keeps every foot tapping, whether you witnessed the original shows or are listening to the recording at home. Available both on CD and as a double CD / DVD digipack, this is one live album not to be missed.

Eddie Thomas

Easyway – Laudamus Vita (Funtime) CD / DVD

And so Portuguese band Easyway embark on an adventure never before undertaken or attempted by a punkrock band. It’s not just about the 16 majestic and heartfelt songs, or acts as they call them. They have depths hardly any one dares or attempts to go to. The very essence of what it is to be human. Love, despair, greed, sadness, joy, revenge... whatever any individual is capable of feeling, these guys have tried putting into music. And they have succeeded. An integral part of the record is the DVD. It’s not a bonus disc with leftovers from the studio as you’d usually expect. It’s a story, a real film, with

amazing actors, about the emotions that make up the songs on the CD. The narrator asks us whether we guide our actions or if our actions guide us? And so, the story begins. Beautifully and very professionally shot, in what I think is Lisbon, the main character travelling through all the phases and emotional states in just a few years. The music fits the entire concept well and vice versa. Easyway have created melodic, almost epic, songs that really touch the very base what makes music such an amazing art form. **Martijn Welzen**

Edge Of Forever – Another Paradise (7Hard/Cargo) CD

Massive, fully-European AOR with big guitars, bigger vocals, and keyboards everywhere. I’m reminded more of Yngwie J. Malmsteen’s Rising Force—minus Yngwie’s guitar acrobatics, of course—than anything else. I’m digging the singer’s voice, but I do tend to appreciate non-English vocalists with heavy accents (ala Loudness, Accept, Scorpions, et al) more than the average person. I find it odd that one of the key points of emphasis in the packaging is that many of the backing vocals are provided by a guy called Bob Harris, who is credited with stints in Axe and both Steve Vai’s and Frank Zappa’s bands... but whose key identifier is as the FORMER singer for Edge Of Forever. This is Edge Of Forever. If you are confused, welcome to my world. BUT... none of that matters. This is a really good AOR/power metal record. Period. ‘Another Paradise’, in particular, is a great song. Unlike most of the stuff I got for review this go-round, I’m going to listen to this one for pleasure at a later date... and I will actually enjoy it! **The Impaler**

El Dog - Let It Snow (Lo-Five records) CD

Please stab me in the ears so I can stop listening to this “Indie” X-mas song. And again why does a label or band send out one song CD’s for review? If you like “indie” bands that cover and crucify X-mas tunes and make them worse than a traditional version, then you might like this, personally I’ll pass. **Jethrobot**

Eradication – Extinction Is Inbound (Self Released) CD

I used to love the metalcore genre. I used to get really stoked at a new Caliban record or Job For A Cowboy tour. However like the genre itself, my interest is dying due to more and more bands just recycling the formula and maybe making it a little heavier. This band does just this. Now I can appreciate the skill in the music. The drums are amazing along with some great guitar work but it’s all been done before. What they do they are doing very well but how many people are going to pick this up and think of hundreds of bands doing this just as well or even better. This band aren’t really so much flogging a dead horse but trying to stuff it, frame it and sell it on Dickinson’s Real Deal. I’m sure there’s going to be a lot of people who will still love this. But for me, its one metalcore clone too far. **BT**

Exodus – Exhibit B: The Human Condition (Nuclear Blast) CD

THRASH...forget the singular capital T, this is all capitals. Want to have a blue print for a modern thrash record? Exhibit B is it! It’s not a surprising record, as it’s the natural follow up to the amazing ‘The Atrocity Exhibition... Exhibit A’. All the wrongs of this world, especially war and terror, are used to spark and ignite the Exodus arsenal. Speed, razorsharp riffs and Rob Dukes piercing vocals. This band will never compromise, the struggle for freedom and musical expression will always be kept alive by this five piece. It’s one of the most aggressive yet compelling records released by any of the older thrash bands. Perfect! **Martijn Welzen**

Fear Factory – Mechanize (Candlelight) CD

Fear Factory have created their own niche in our tightly packed metal scene. Debut ‘The Soul of a New Machine’ paved the way for the band’s benchmark and absolutely amazing ‘Demufacture’. Every album they released after 1995 was compared to that record. ‘Obsolete’ (1998) came close, but from that point onward the Fear Factory machine started to slow down, which might have bene the impetus that led to lead original guitar player Dino Cazares leaving in 2002. The band continued down that spiral until in 2008 Christian Olde Wolbers and Raymond Herrera left and Dino Cazares returned to the fold. To be honest I didn’t think anyone could ever replace Herrera who’s drumming is,...Well, not of this Earth. However the band found another extra terrestrial musician with the name of Gene Hoglan. Hoglan pulled it off... so did the other members. ‘Mechanize’ is the best Fear Factory record since 1995. The right aggression, clean vocals, hard hitting riffs and above all, the industrial drums. All of the band’s trademarks are back. All guns are blazing again. And as a bonus the band is going to be touring Europe soon. This is a rapid fire flash back to the mid 90’s. Bring it on... **Mar-**



Fightstar – Be Human (Search & Destroy) CD/DVD

It must be a royal pain in the onions trying to shake the reputation of your former band when they have scaled the heights of teeny pop fandom; so some respect is due to Charlie Simpson for persevering with Fightstar, despite the legions of naysayers wishing to see him fall flat on his face. So what does this 'deluxe edition' have to offer? Some rather grandiose arrangements, a smidgeon of progginess and some disturbing reggae leanings (particularly on opening track 'Calling on All Stations'). The band fair better on the more post hardcore/metal sounding stuff such as 'Colours Bleed to Red', 'Damocles', and the Porcupine Tree-esque 'Follow Me into Darkness'. Fans of Biffy Clyro would probably dig this but I'm not sure its enough to convince those who have already made up their minds about the band. This edition also contains five new songs including a Jordin Sparkes' cover (not really a selling point for readers of Mass Movement I'm sure) and the DVD features 8 tracks recorded live at Northampton in 2009. Die hards will buy for that reason alone, the inquisitive might be tempted, the fiercely opposed will ignore out of sheer bloody mindedness. **Ian Pickens**

Fishermans Mission – This Is Therapy (UPR) CD

Now here's a right kick in the nuts that I definitely needed, and I think the world needs too. Fishermans Mission play a kind-of acoustic prog-rock with way-out-there, art-rock elements, like a more accessible HORSE The Band. Imagine if Dream Theater were still influenced by all the prog and Pink Floyd, but instead of having an Iron Maiden fetish they had a jones for mid-90s San Diego hardcore and latter-day Neurosis. 'This Is Therapy' comes off on more of a mellow tip than a frenzied one for most of these 8 fantastic tracks, but the psychotic overtones get more and more intense as things progress. Every time I spin this, I wait for the whole thing to fall apart, but it never does. It may or may not be good therapy, but it's definitely a worthwhile adventure. **The Impaler**

Grave Maker – Ghosts Among Men (Victory) CD

When Canadian band Figure Four dissolved, Comeback Kid got created by two of it's former bandmembers. The heaviness that was an important part of Figure Four apparently died with it's demise. Or so it seemed! Grave Maker, a new power house built around former FF bass player Jason Bailey kicks a door or two with 'Ghost Among Men'. It sounds like a band on the tougher side of Sick Of It All, grooving like Terror, but unfortunately never outside the strict boundaries of straight up hardcore. That's where this band needs to work on. You get introduced to an awesome and powerful start, but the attention can't be kept to the very end. **Martijn Welzen**

Heidevolk – Uit Oude Grond (Napalm) CD

Pagan metal, as a genre is not new and not limited to any single country. Having a band singing in Dutch about the days of old, before Christianity...er ruined it for all of us, is new to me. Although Heidevolk have been around for a couple of years it's safe to say 'Uit Oude Grond' is something else. The band have outdone themselves and created a new benchmark for Dutch pagan metal. Before, they could have been dismissed as an oddity or a gimmick, now they're a serious metal force capable of slaying a wild bear or a pack of wolves. Battle hymns about how their region of Gelderland were formed by warfare and bloodshed. Great Manowar like melodies, with a death metal touch and folk influences have created a vibe through which you can almost envision the woods of the low countries and the seas surrounding it. 'Voorwaarts...' **Martijn Welzen**

He-Who-Can-Not-Be-Named – Sunday School Massacre (See Of Sound/MVD Audio) CD

Dwarves fans rejoice: the masked maniac behind all of those fantastic guitar sounds has finally gone and put out a solo record, and it delivers the goods in every conceivable fashion. He-Who... sings most of the songs himself, with a great Blag-meets-Danzig-meets-G.G. vocal style and lyrics (also all self-composed) that are by turns funny, disturbing, and thoughtful, in true Dwarves style. Guests include numerous Dwarves alums and other bad-asses from here and there, including: Blag Dahlia (vocals on the amazing 'Machine Boy'), The Fresh Prince Of Darkness (extra guitars), Saltpeter (bass, vocals, acoustic guitar), Rex Everything (vocals), Joe Dean (guitars), Andy Selway (of Spittin' Cobras, KMFDM, et al—drums), Wholly Smokes (guitars), Hugh Yerburch (guitars), Alex Tuttle (trombone—and yes, it's worth it!), and DJ Marz (beats, vocals—again, worth it, worth it, worth it!!!). With songs as fantastic as 'Happy Suicide', 'Duct Tape Love', 'Hate Song', 'Daddy Is Dead',

'Motorboating', 'Medication', and 'Toxine', what's not to love?!? Word on the street is that a new Dwarves record is due soon, and as great as it is going to be (I mean, it's a Dwarves record... come on!), there's no telling what it'll sound like... 'Sunday School Massacre', however, is a dark, twisted journey into the mind of a madman, with seemingly endless layers of guitars that range from the twisted psychedelic sounds found on 'Thank Heaven For Little Girls' to the hyper-adrenalized punk fury found on 'Young And Good Looking'. From start to finish, 'Sunday School Massacre' is sheer perfection. **The Impaler**

I Am Abomination – To Our Forfathers (Good Fight Music) CD

Boy, is this the sort of band that would give our main editor, Tim, everlasting nightmares. Emotional sweetness is everywhere with I Am Abomination, so much so, that it's almost hurting my teeth. Situated in between the slick sounding metal bands and well-known emo bands, their sound has elements ranging from Avenged Sevenfold to Coheed and Cambria to Panic At The Disco. It really is that diverse, a diversity aided in no small part by the amazing musical ability of the band. The melodies flow, the solos are top of the bill and the hooks razor-sharp. In the end though, it really is a bit too sweet, spineless even. Metal(core) for the masses, it tastes good, but hardly satisfies the metal-wolverines in all of us. I'd say keep developing your already amazing talents, turn them into something you can truly call your own. Develop something that people will really remember five years from now... **Martijn Welzen**

In-Sane – Trust These Hands... Are Worthless (Shield) CD

I'm a bit let down by this CD, In-Sane's second full-length record. The sound just isn't up to par anymore, especially when compared to other modern melodic punkrock records. With sound I'm talking about a technical thing, and not personal taste in music. It sometimes feels like this band is playing so fast their recorder can't keep up. Several times beautiful ideas go crashing into a concrete wall at high speed. This band, from Slovenia are, when you listen to them a bit more closely, an amazing skate punk band, able of combining simple Millencolin tunes, with hard hitting Hot Water Music rock. There's no doubt in my mind that they're amazing songwriters, but the lack of time and / or budget threw a firm wrench into the In-Sane machine. **Martijn Welzen**

Jack Rabbit Slim - Hairdo's & Heartaches (The Western Star Records) CD

Opening track was awful, if you're gonna do an album at least start it with a cracking song! Luckily it gets a little better after that. Traditional rockabilly sound that takes the influences from Gene Vincent & Elvis etc. Very basic sounding but if you like to be thrown back to the 50's then this is for you for sure. **Paul Hoddy**

John Candy- Conversations (All Aboard Records) CD

For a band who hail from pop punk origins it's always going to be slightly risqué when you take a stab at a sound much more delicate. The two man collaboration, made up of goodbye/futures, Ant West and George Lindsay is a breezy trip into indie pop rock territory. For most of the record you're waiting for it to explode into something, but sadly the explosion never comes. Instead it gracefully floats along, leaving you wondering where one song ends and another starts. Naming your band after John Candy leaves you with the feeling that what your about to hear is something fun and larger than life, but what you're left with is more of a unfulfilled, slightly tired feeling. I think 'Robert Pattinson' would be a much more suited band name. For fans of Death Cab for a Cutie and some of Jimmy Eat World's mellower tracks. **Fletch**

Liberty Leg - Ginger Lee (Wrecked-Em Records) CD

I must admit that I was a little sceptical before starting to listen to this and my spider senses were right!! It just does nothing for me musically at all, it's like a bunch of college kids have just gotten together and made a few songs up and recorded it in a garage, on an even worse note, they don't even use a Bass guitar.....sacrilege! **Paul Hoddy**

Life Of Agony – 20 Years Strong – River Runs Red (Live In Brussels) (I Scream) CD / DVD

How cool is 'River Runs Red', Life of Agony's debut album? So many bands, including LOA, have tried getting that energy, that vibe and those intense emotions in their own music. It's not a technique, though it's something

no one could ever catch. And all that greatness happened 20 years ago... two decades my friends. And still 'River Runs Red' is as essential as it was back then. To prove that fact, the guys from Brooklyn, chose a few selected dates and played their debut in it's entirety. And these shows were sold out in next to no time which shows there's still a huge demand for this band from the underground. I Scream once again spoils us by offering up this live CD / DVD package through which you can experience, almost first hand, the amazing gig they did in Brussels. And yes Life Of Agony still have it. It's relentless and amazing. The intensity these guys have, ensure that they're still one of my favourite bands. Hopefully they'll continue on this path when writing and recording their new album... **Martijn Welzen**



March of the Raptors – March of the Raptors (Self Released, Distributed by Essential) CD/Digital www.myspace.com/marchoftheraptors

Modern metal tinged with hardcore influences, favoured by In At The Deep End style bands, topped off with melodic interludes and the passionate vocals of former Adequate 7 front man Jamie Searle. Seven quality tracks with no fillers (eight counting the radio edit of opening track, the intense 'Perish in Flames') which should partially satisfy those feeling the acute loss of A7. A strong debut release which promises much. **Ian Pickens**

March Of The Raptors – March Of The Raptors (The New Black/Essential Music) CD

Ahhh, Gallows... you goddamn beautiful fuckers! You had to come on the scene, didn't you? Had to be, simply put, devastatingly awesome in every way. Had to play every shithole in the UK. Had to know that the faithful would try to follow your path.... And then we have March Of The Raptors, who may not even fucking like Gallows for all I know. They're from London. They have been together less than a year. A bunch of this record sounds like it could be scratch demos for the first Gallows record. Then there are the parts of this record that sound like scratch demos from the second or third Shadows Fall record. Heavy part! Heavier part! Soft, pretty part! Heavy part! Bass drop! Mosh, motherfuckers! Mosh some more! Soooooo..... Bass drop! Heaviest part! Even prettier part! Jimmy Eat World part! Heavy part! Heavier part! And such-and-such. I may seem like a dickhead taking the piss in this review, but I certainly don't hate this record. It really sounds more like a demo, and the band needs to stop with the copying and actually find themselves... but that's pretty much true of every young band just starting out. There is plenty of talent evident here, and I would not be surprised if their 2nd or 3rd record had March Of The Raptors making serious waves in the metal scene. **The Impaler**

Mary's Kids – Mary'Kids (Flotation Records) CD

Feisty female fronted Scandinavian scamboogery from ex-members of Mensen and Sons of Cyrus. Sleazy punk rock n roll ala Glucifer, Supersuckers and the mighty Turbonegro, with some wonderful pop hooks, back up the highly enjoyable, frenzied vocals of Mary herself. MK belt out 14 energy packed gems with such enthusiasm I can even forgive the plagiarised Dead Boys and Patti Smith lyrics ('Cruiser' and 'White Nigger'). An impressive debut album. Not keen on that name though. **Ian Pickens**

Mehida - The Eminent Storm (Bullroser) CD

The Eminent Storm is the second album from Finnish 'Christian progressive melodic Metal' band, Mehida, whom I admit that I had not heard of before, despite containing one time Candlemass vocalist Thomas Vikstrom. While Thomas sang on the lesser Candlemass releases, there's no doubting his Queensrychian vocal dexterity in on this release. Equally the musicianship, as expected in this style of melodic power Metal is exemplary. The production is clear, full and layered with keyboards, backing vocals and the kitchen sink, as expected of the genre these days. But what does that really mean? Well, to these ears Mehida trade in lavish melodic rock with which the likes of Within Temptation and Evanescence have achieved such success. It's not my bag, though there are some heavy-ish moments and it's certainly not offensively pleasant. There are some truly insipid moments, a lot of overtly melodic choruses, bathed in effects that even manufactured pop bands might think lacking in balls, the loathsome Dream Giver being a prime example. The general feel is that of an expertly crafted melodic rock album, recommended to fans of the style, but to anyone requiring a little less sheen and a little more bite, I'd steer well clear. **Chest Rockwell**

Meleeh - To Live And Die Alone (Black Star Foundation) CD

Despite my initial horror and revulsion at the cacophonous vocal terror unleashed by Converge many moons ago, I have eventually come to appreciate the crushing musical power of their approach and the undeniable intensity of their live shows. That said, I still reflexively balk at the unending atonal screech adopted by vocalists of the genre. While Thomas here doesn't quite hit Jake's high end, the seemingly unending anger is akin. Where it comes from I don't know, but certainly it can't be good for the throat. I don't know if that means that I will come to love Meleeh or never listen to them again because frankly the singer ruins it all for me. Time will tell. Sonically though Meleeh have a rather similar Convergeian attack; mixing breaks, melody and pounding riffs with rolling beats and space to breath, all to great effect. There is as much restraint exercised as there is intensity which helps balance out the battering ram vocals. I love the music, I just wish the singer would chill out a little! Still, I know there are a lot of people out there that love this stuff, and to them I would say check these Swedes out soon. **Chest Rockwell**

Noyalty – The Seas Have No Roads (Funtime) CD

Good melodic hardcore is what Dutch band Noyalty bring to the table. It's not about being new or original, but just like the band say; it's about passion, energy, intensity and fun and that's exactly what you get. A fierce mix of Comeback Kid and A Wilhelm Scream with plenty of sing-a-longs, that grabs you by your dyed hair, and doesn't let go until the last note fades out. Hardcore to the bone, and the band's debut on an official label after their independent 'Between The Broken' release. If these guys are as tight on stage as they are on this album, mastered by Alan Douches, you can expect a whirlwind of insanity. **Martijn Welzen**

Onward To Olympas – This Is Not My World (Facedown) CD

This is a totally fresh approach to the old metalcore genre. Onward To Olympus are the heaviest of bands, with blastbeats and parts you can mosh your brains out, but also have songs that are totally old school hardcore, played as though it were metal. I had my doubts after the first two spins, but it really seems to be working as the songs are growing on me and interesting bits keep on popping up with every play. Although loads different things seem to be happening simultaneously the songs,, and here it comes; do NOT fall apart. The singer / guitarist even points this out on the artwork, and he's absolutely right. Personally I like a different approach to the grunting / growling, but when a six foot bear is in your face you're not going to complain about the noise he makes, are you? A fierce and dangerous record. **Martijn Welzen**

Overkill – Wrecking Everything (Live) (Metal Mind) CD

Another amazing re-issue from Metal Mind; Overkill's great live album 'Wrecking Everything'. The 13 songs, recorded in 2002 in the band's home state New Jersey, are a nice cross section of the band's best songs at the time. 'Necroshine' is on here, opening the record up, as is my personal favourite Overkill song 'Evil Never Dies' and the band-anthem 'In Union We Stand'. The sound quality is great, although I think the audience, always an important part in live sets, could have had a bit more space on the disc. You can only hear them between songs or when Blitz is directly asking the insane mob for a response. 'Wrecking...' has been limited to a 1000 copies so do your best to get this before it's gone. **Martijn Welzen**

Paddy & The Rats - Rats On Board (Nordic Records) CD

Better than Flogging Molly, Dropkick Murphys and The Pogues in my humble opinion, Paddy & The Rats are a real dirty punk, Celtic, Irish band. Very catchy tunes that make you wanna dance, drink, dance a little more and drink a lot more. I love the track "We Will Fight" it's one of them fast paced Irish songs that you can't help but swing your body around to. Never heard of this band around before but glad I have now, excellent! Now, what shall we do with the drunken sailor? **Paul Hoddy**

pg.lost - In Never Out (Black Star Foundation) CD

No doubt the type of music beloved of those scenester, sideswipe hairstyled types that have infiltrated the ranks of smelly Metalheads in recent years, to the consternation of some and the musical education of others, such as myself, Swedes pg.lost play that miserablist form of epic soundscape already perfected by the likes of Mogwai in non-Metal circles and Isis in arguably more rocky climes. Post-rock, I think we're all agreed. While this is occasionally blissful and very well executed, it's sometimes drab and not a little

depressing. I guess it just depends on your take and your taste. Having seen Red Sparowes play a few incredible sets touring their debut album, years ago, I have yet to hear or see anything in this genre that makes me think anything other than only that record is necessary. The inclusion much of the typical broad dynamics, slow buildups and even what sounds like a track (Still Alright) almost entirely modelled on an early Red Sparowes piece, makes this even more of a for-connoisseurs-only type deal. Once again, an often beautiful and haunting collection, exquisitely done, but perhaps one for the already converted or the open minded yet unaware newcomer. **Chest Rockwell**



haha! Needless to say, if Resistance weren't Belgian, they'd be signed to Century Media or Metal Blade by now, but that's life and the fickle reality of the mu-sick biz. **Ian Glasper**

Rick Seney - I Am A Man With A St Tropez Tan/ Music For Voyeurs (Hangman Ho Records) 2xCD

The quirky rhyming band title of I Am A Man With A St Tropez Tan belies the music on this interesting album by Rick Seney. From the elements of trip hop (I Like Your Mouth), jilted electronics on I'm Haunted and thumping electronic synth drops (Get Off Me, I Will Kill You), this

album recalls Boards Of Canada and Aphex Twin, M83 and even Toro Y Moi but it never sounds like a carbon copy of these musicians and is a record full of surprises. What I like most is that at times the pace of the album is frantic and then swiftly alters into something mellower; it is as though gabba musicians made a chillout record for the summer sun. It is experimental in the truest sense - don't judge this book by its cover, this album should not be dismissed. From the same artist and released in close succession comes Music For Voyeurs. Aside from having fewer 'glitchy' tracks, replacing them with smoother transitions within each song and the album as a whole, there is not much to separate the two records, they certainly both have a similar vision. This is no criticism; Music For Voyeurs is also a very engrossing, well-crafted record, very heartening as well considering what the composer has been through (visit to find out more about his personal grievances which led him to record these albums). What I especially like about this record is the prominence of the piano, it gives the record a more somber tone which is very powerful indeed. These two albums, though clearly very introspective pieces of music, need to be heard. They are truly worthy of recognition whether you like more sombre electronic music or something a bit more weird and wonderful. Rick Seney is an inspiration. **Lauren Barley**

Runtime Terror - S/T (Self Released Demo) CD

FUCK YEAH! Old school crusty/hardcore punk. Completely DIY, recorded in a basement, lots of feedback, fast short bursts of songs. Reminds me at times of a faster Dook (UK) or some of the Swedish D-Beat / Crusty bands like Skitsystem. This is the punk/hc I miss, now everyone is on a label and over produced and sound the same, and while this is a CD Demo, it's no different than the old school cassette demos which were always self released or on a friends label that came and went in the blink of an eye, recorded in basements and are still a lot of my favourites to listen to. This is by far one of the best releases I have reviewed for MM, more bands should go back to the old school. Fuck labels, release your own stuff - it's easier now than it ever it was. Runtime Terror kick ass and deserve your support! Limited to 50 copies, I'm glad I have one! **Jethrobot**

Sacred Mother Tongue - The Ruin of Man (Transcend) CD

Everyone needs to need to hear this band's second song 'Anger on Reflection' to know what this amazing four-piece are capable of. If Zoli Teglas (Igneite, Pennywise) was the singer in a metal band, this is what they would sound like, and what an amazing combination it is. A terrific vocalist backed up by a band playing thrash with a modern twist. The speed, haunting melodies and singer Darrin make this debut by the Northhampton youngsters a record that might very well land in the top ten of 2010. Everything is done right, it's heavy yet catchy without falling to some commercial nu-metal trap. The maturity and will to write good songs is omnipresent and preserved by producer Scott Atkins (Gama Bomb, Sylosis) for all eternity. Time will tell if this really is the classic record I already think it is, but the prize for the biggest surprise of 2010 is already theirs for the taking.... **Martijn Welzen**

Said And Done - Weight Of The World (Carry The Weight) 7"

Time to get your groove going again with the Dutch answer to Cro Mags and Maximum Penalty. With these four new songs there's a sense of maturity slowly creeping into this pack of howling wolves. They're always working on improving their songs, and playing their asses off in any and every shithole that's willing to lend them a stage. They know what the band should sound like, and the guitars, especially, have improved tremendously. I only hope the drums will get a bit more room in the mix next time around. Music this good needs to have a massive sound. **Martijn Welzen**

Savatage - Still The Orchestra Plays: Greatest Hits Volumes 1 & 2 (Ear Music) 2xCD

I don't think there has ever been a band that takes metal as seriously as Savatage, and I certainly can't think of another band—from any era—that strips itself down and lays it all on the line as ferociously and honestly as these leg-

Picastro—Become Secret (Monotreme Records) CD

Jim: I like the album artwork, it's edgy, very interesting.

Amy: If you love to be depressed by The Cure, Depeche Mode (or Depressed Mood as Jim calls them), and Nick Cave, you'll love the all-new Picastro.

Never fear, mom, the handgun does not come free with purchase!

Jim: The music creates a gloomy atmosphere which the vocals do nothing to dispel. It's kind of like My Dying Bride without the metal, but somehow I still kind of like it.

Amy: This from a man who can't watch The Butterfly Effect because it's too sad?

Jim: You can put a four letter word starting with "f" and add the word "you" and you can add a "b" word if you want.

Amy: Oh, we "feel you Beethoven" channeled through this band.

OHM.....I'm sure that's what you meant.

Jim: This would be the number one album to play from your darkened porch on Halloween. I like it.

Amy: You keep it. It isn't bad, but I like my more pop-ish Cure, Depeche Mode, and Nick Cave. They have more groove and dynamics. Or maybe The White Stripes, I get that kind of feel too. **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

Point Counter Point - Self Titled (Self Released) CDEP

www.myspace.com/pointcounterpointuk

Hmm, at first I genuinely thought this CD was faulty then I realised that PCP are going for that 'experimental' Jagjaguwar records sound (Bon Ivor, Onieda etc), but do they pull it off? This certainly takes a few listens to warm to, instant appeal is sacrificed for something more progressive, and perseverance is the watchword on the part of the listener. An intriguing collection of songs that will appeal to more open minded readers, but if you find the terms 'cinematic' and 'musical landscapes' pretentious, then PCP are probably not for you. **Ian Pickens**

RedLightGreenLight—Everything has Gone Wrong (Engineer Records) CD

Jim: I don't like it. I think this is what they call post-hardcore. The "post" part meaning it's after all the good stuff.

Amy: Yep, it's doo-doo. It is like heavy emo - whiny for the most part with some trying-way-too-hard-screaming thrown in to seem tough. The music is boring and unimaginative.

Jim: Can I say something now? The album is well-produced and it sounds like the band put a lot of thought and feeling into their songs, but to me it's weak and not very interesting.

Amy: Bring out the Midol and Tampax for the singer. I guess some ear plugs for us. Their girlfriends probably think they rock, but I do not.

Note: This CD was taken out after less than 3 minutes of skipping through some tracks, staying with each one as long as we could stand. Perhaps it gets better? **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

Resistance - Lords Of Torment (GSR) CD

Not only have these guys recently toured with Kataklysm, but the Kataklysm guitarist mixed and mastered this, so it seems pretty redundant to comment on one very obvious influence at play here... but needless to say, Resistance are fast as fuck and love to BLAST! Some of their really squelchy passages are very reminiscent of Suffocation as well, which has gotta be a good thing, right? They also like to chunk out the beatdowns though, so they temper their furious death metal with some even more furious hardcore. I guess that makes them one of these trendy deathcore bands then? Whatever makes you feel safest, I guess, but they've paid their dues. In fact, this is the band's third album, so they've got their shit down really fucking tight, and although they sometimes do that annoying pseudo-melodic thing with the guitar harmonies, they never stray too far from the righteous path of outright brutality. 'F.Y.A' (i.e. 'Fuck You All') is so gratuitous an onslaught on the senses, it's almost funny; damn, these guys sound pissed... a bit like Decide covering Merauder,

band, showcasing fan favorites from every era and a few lesser-known tracks hand-picked by the band itself. This compilation throws the gauntlet to the ground with 33 songs spread over 2 discs, including 3 brand-new acoustic renditions of, simply put, bad-ass tunes. Savatage records should come with a warning label, and I'm supplying the language for it here: Don't even THINK about telling anyone that you like metal, even a little bit, if you don't dig Savatage. The entire back catalogue is being spruced up for re-release over the next year or so, and this compilation is both the perfect place to start for newcomers and a tasty appetizer for the true believers. Plus, Trans-Siberian Orchestra is basically just Savatage anyway, and since every mom alive seems to dig TSO, they won't mind it if you blow up a few speakers in the mini-van with the real deal... right?!? **The Impaler**



Saving Grace – Unbreakable (Strike First) CD

Good ideas don't necessarily make a good song, or a good record for that matter. I like the heaviness and breaks by this insane four piece from New Zealand, but it's just parts of the songs that really come across and grab you. It lacks much needed consistency. I'd like these songs to be true songs, like the metal bands of old wrote. Being the heaviest isn't the problem for Saving Grace, but the songwriting is. Some work really needs to be done here. I'm not interested in musical flat packs where I need to put the songs together myself...**Martijn Welzen**

Scream Allegiance – Self Titled - Demo download (<http://www.reverbnation.com/screamallegiance>)

Ah yes, this is the stuff. Solid metal which, thankfully, combines heaviness with groove, and eschews the screamo/metalcore leanings of their contemporaries. Think Pantera, Exhorder, Lamb of God et al. Dynamic vocals touch on everything from the old school of Halford to the modern academy of Randy Blythe, a solid, dependable backline, and enough riffs to shake a BC Rich at. The band move effortlessly between the mid tempo chug of the self titled track and the high speed thrash metal attack of 'Easy Prey' displaying a diversity which many current acts lack. Scream Allegiance have captured the spirit and sound of the thrash metal era without sounding retro or nostalgic, a trick which many are now trying to emulate, but few have achieved so successfully. **Ian Pickens**

Sectioned - Purulent Reality (Paragon Records) CD

Formed in the UK but now based in Hungary, this debut from Sectioned really reminds me of an awesome old Roadrunner Death Metal At Death's Door which featured the likes of Cerebral Fix, Death, Pestilence, Atrocity, amongst Deicide, Obituary and Sepultura. Purulent Reality would not only sit in there with no difficulty, this album has almost an identical feel to that classic compilation. You've got the Cerebral rasping vocals over near constant old school Death Metal grooves. All the expected time and riff changes are catered for with some nice old school breakdowns, melodic sections where required and death vocal 'melodies' tastefully layered over the top, never overpowering. Tracks such as Mirrors really thrash-chug along and then have those Pestilence style melodic breaks, which really accentuate the Death-chugging! This is my kind of Death Metal. If anything could be taken away from it, it's only the familiarity due to the homage it pays to a respected genre. That said, I'd put this next to my Death or Pestilence albums and when the time comes I'd reach for this with no qualms. Unlike a lot of conventional Death Metal that grinds and blasts it's way to nowhere in particular, it's refreshing that in this day in age there are bands out there that really appreciate what to me was the peak of Death Metal. **Chest Rockwell**

Shotgun Cure - Depravity Unleashed (Self Released) MCD Every great thrash band had a humble beginning. It's just not the type of music where you can start at the top of the food chain. Toronto based Shotgun Cure are doing what young bands do. Formed in 2006 they played some shows, wrote some songs and in August of 2009 thought it was time to release a 5-track EP. As far as the sound goes, we're all spoiled rotten and 'Depravity Unleashed' can't meet these standards. Below the surface there's what I would call a mixture of old Metallica and Evile. I'm not a fan of the blast beat attempted in 'Sustainment', which doesn't lift the music to a higher level, as I'm more into that typical galloping sound, which, again, Evile, are a prime 21st-century-example of. Another bunch of madmen trying to fight their way to Thrash Valhalla, if they keep on working this hard, one day they'll surely get there...**Martijn Welzen**

Skull Crusher – Blinded By Illusion (Reflections) MCD

I haven't experienced this kind of energy from a NYHC band a very, very long time. And it's about as about time too, as I've missed this old friend for far too long. Bands like Judge, Cro Mags, Killing Time, Raw Deal and Token Entry laid the foundations of this beauty. Only four songs long, this EP, but each one is a winner. You can feel the underbelly and undercurrent of one of the most important cities in the world. The personal and social problems, emphasized by the excerpt from the film 'Taxi Driver' in 'A Real Rain' make Skull Crusher what they are. From the streets and sincere to the bone. The amazing artwork also acts a mirror to our dying world. Get it while you're still drawing breath... **Martijn Welzen**

Snowblood – Untitled / Self Titled (SuperFi Records) CD

This third and final album by mighty Glaswegian quartet Snowblood is so fucking good it doesn't even need a title. For those of you who don't already know Snowblood are one of those rare bands who rather than pigeonhole themselves into any specific genre incorporate a vast array of musical styles decimating all that lay in their wake. Debut album 'Being and Becoming' and it's successor 'The Human Tragedy' were proper musical gems, one minute you'd be treated to soft, off key and unusual melodies the next crushing doom laden riffs and harsh chugging cataclysms. With this offering the boys from up North seem to have upped the ante in terms of delivering a sonic assault of crushing doom, keeping the mellowness to a minimum as if to say (in retrospect of their earlier work) we always were heavy as fuck we just chose to hold back, simply... because we can. If anyone ever doubted the band's doom credentials this is the album equivalent to eating your hat (be that a cast iron helmet)... it might not be pretty but this entry is pure, unapologetically brutal scurge that would happily hold it's own next to Iron Monkey's debut, Neurosis at their heaviest and Eyehategod at their nastiest. Ethereal atmospherics lead way to reverb heavy noodling, behemoth riffing and equally devastating melodies. It's a shame to think this is the last studio album from these titans of intelligent doom but fuck me is it an impressive curtain call. Buy this album! **Ioan**

Sonata Arctica – Songs Of Silence – Live in Japan (Spinefarm) CD

With any power or speed metal, I personally expect tight musicianship with bombastic solos (a la Dragonforce), crystal clear and razor sharp riffs and timely rhythmic drumming - and Finnish band Sonata Arctica on their live recording Songs of Silence certainly tick all the boxes. The riffs and guitar interplay comes thick and fast throughout the recording with the strongest tracks being Black Sheep, Wolf and Raven and Weballergy. There is a break from all the power metal in the form of a ballad (of sorts) on the track End Of This Chapter, though I much prefer the tracks with less metal crooning. I cannot deny that for a live album it is really very strong and the quality is maintained throughout. Judging by the reaction from a rapturous Japanese audience, they are obviously a huge hit. For me though, despite it's strong points, I find this all a bit too tiring! **Lauren Barley**

Sonata Arctica – Takatalvi (Spinefarm) CD

Already released in most of Europe, in 2001, but only available in the UK through import channels, this is Sonata Arctica's tribute album. That is, it's almost a tribute album, as there are also five original SA songs on here. Overall it's not the best album to start with if you're unfamiliar with Sonata's melodic metal. Their own songs are good, but there's a reason they haven't been released before. They feel a bit like left-overs. The same goes for the covers; 'Still Loving You' (Scorpions) and 'Die With Your Boots On' (Iron Maiden) are nice, but 'Fade To Black' (Metallica) is nothing short of disgraceful. The one song really worth mentioning is 'I Want Out', originally by Helloween. The main reason being that is that Helloween have a lot in common with Sonata Arctica. For diehard fans only...**Martijn Welzen**

Sonata Arctica – Winterheart's Guild (Spinefarm) CD

Ah, this is what this Finnish band does best. Writing long, melodic stories that are filled with guitar and keyboard battles. Some ballads are thrown in for good measure and at the same time, the band reach amazing velocity when song needs them to. Originally released in 2003, this is the best way to dive into and sample Sonata's past. Forget 'Takatalvi', these songs are everything that's great about power metal. A bit old fashioned for all hell raisers out there, but when you put this on in your car you'll be breaking the speed of light in next to no time...**Martijn Welzen**

Sorry And The Sinatras – Hated Heart (Seven Inch Records)

So when I had this for review I was understandably excited. I mean just seeing the words "Featuring members of The Wildhearts and former members of

Amen" I was buzzing with anticipation. And this sweet little 7" has not disappointed. Released to coincide with a UK tour this is a great release. It reminds me of some great So-Cal punk bands which can only be a good thing. Title track hated heart has one of the most catchy sing-a-long choruses I've heard in a very long time. 7 seconds to Austin slows things down a bit but its still a great track. It kind of reminds me of some older country rock songs. Finishing off the EP strong early morning heartache sounds like something lifted straight from a social distortion or rancid album. A great little record which leaves me hungry for more. **BT**



Speak Your Heart- This is How We Communicate (Engineer Records) CD

After sitting and absorbing this record what first strikes me is that their actually pretty clever. Their obviously heavily influenced by the emo/screamo scene and this is evident in the music, but they've taken it upon themselves to step away from the other 2 million whinging wagon hoppers in the UK (Its not exactly rocket science). By no means am I saying that Speak Your Heart are the only guys playing this sound, but they're certainly the first I've heard. Trading distortion and squealing guitar hooks for an acoustic guitar sound, the band back this up with pounding drums and clearly, a lot of heart. They fall somewhere between a mix of Dashboard Confessional, Rufio and Taking Back Sunday. Although I'm not so keen on the whiney vocals, this band brings a breath of fresh air to a scene which is currently knocking on death's door. **Fletch**

Straight Lines – Persistence In This game (Xtra Mile Recordings) CD

So local boys (well, local to me anyway) Straight Lines have made a record and it feels a long time coming. I've seen this band many times in almost all the different line ups and other names. But they say good things come to those who wait. And in this case, it really is worth the wait. This album is packed with catchiness. There's something to keep you singing along or tapping your feet in every song. From the mellow slow paced ballads of All My Friends Have Joined the Army, Oh Blue Eyes and The Ballad of Peter Devine to the driving high paced driving anthems of Verses the Allegiance and Antics and even the very poppy Set Me on Fire and Feed Me To the Wolves, this album has a lot of contrast in the songs but is still a great record. This album has a lot to give you if you give it the time. I'm glad that I did. **BT**

Struck Out – Not My Fucking War (Self Released Demo) CD (www.my-space.com/struckoutband)

Rough and ready punk rock from deepest, darkest Neath. Rancid are an obvious influence on these guys, particularly the bass player (including his vocal style), although the faster, trashier elements are more in keeping with the Casualties and a general UK82 style. The band have striven for a 100% DIY effort and recorded these four tracks live using 4 microphones. As much as I respect the ethic, the sound quality is so bad that the volume needs to be cranked right up just to hear anything. Having seen these guys live recently, this demo doesn't really do them justice, but at £1 + PnP its worth picking up so they can raise enough money to record the next one at a proper studio, Show the lads some love. **Ian Pickens**

Swingin' Utters – Brand New Lungs (Fat Wreck Chords) 7"

I've always thought of the Utters as a kind of punk rock AC/DC. They do what they do well, they know what works, and they stick to the formula. That makes the band sound a tad lazy but that's not my intention. I like the fact that these San Franciscans consistently turn out meat and potatoes punk rock, and these three tracks are no exception to that rule. Angular guitar rhythms, Bonnel's, gravelly, whiskey soaked vocals, McGowen-esque lyrics, shades of Stiff Little Fingers and the Cockney Rejects, it's all here and its all good. 'Forward to Fun' being a particularly strong track. **Ian Pickens**

The Bermondsey Joyriders - Self Titled (Fuel Injection Records) CD

Jim: We seem to be getting a lot of old-school feel out of this batch [of albums for review]. It sounds like if DeeDee were the lead singer of the Ramones.

Amy: I like this one. The old-school punk things is good for me. I was too young to enjoy it the first time around, so the revival is great!

Jim: I love this, it's the coolest one so far.

Amy: I like it too. Again, in case you aren't familiar with old-school punk, fast, raw songs, raspy voices, grinding guitars.

Jim: And the lyrics are nearly unintelligible which only adds to the mystery and the beauty. I think their singer may have taken voice lessons from Tom

Watts. Damn, that's good music.

Amy: There is a bit of blues guitar mixed in. It is B.B. King meets the Sex Pistols.

Jim: I think you nailed it there, babe. **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

The Burned Up- Blood Like Fire (Self Released) CD-

Words of Devastation, Painful Demise and Blood Like Fire; with track titles like that, you pretty much know what's about to penetrate your ear holes. To my horror, what I was about to hear was much worse. Reading through these guys' biography I discovered that these dudes have been active since 2000, but still manage to sound like a bunch of 7 years olds who started a Metallica tribute band. You can't blame production for this one, or lousy instruments. You can only blame the band for actually thinking it's good. With vocals that have about as much impact as Victoria Beckham singing live and guitar solos which endlessly flutter into the heavy metal abyss, the only thing positive left to say is; go buy a copy of Metallica's, 'The Black Album' instead. **Fletch**

The Casting Out – The Casting Out (Eyeball) CD

Just thought I should give The Casting Out a try. It's the last record that came in, and more or less got shelved due to loads of personal things. For some reason I thought it would be a so-so kind of band, but had to review it anyway. Then I was violently hit in the face, by the band, again and again, song after song. 'You ignorant prick!', this one's for forgetting about the Casting Out. We are an amazing band! I'm so very, very sorry my friends. How could I know you have Nathan Gray singing for you? Quite possibly the best hardcore / punkrock singer in the world. Where I think that with the last Boysset-fire record, (for those who did not know he sang in that band), he sounded tired, but here, with The Casting Out, the energy is back. The Casting Out are more punkish and reminded me of Dag Nasty, All and Samiam, with their sense of catchiness and fun. What else can I say about this band? They're going to big and believe me, they'll never be shelved again. Not ever. **Martijn Welzen**

The Dwyers - Gas Station Masturbation (Psychedlica records/Airiston Punk Levyt) CD

Catchy Finnish Punk Rock, that while not new or ground breaking, is a lot of fun to listen too. I got into it right away, tapping my toes and singing along with the choruses. You have the typical songs about drinking, alienation, girls, depression and masturbation. I wouldn't run out and buy this with my last ten bucks but I also wouldn't turn it off if it came on either. This is the bands first full length so it can only get better from here. If you like Rancid, Blanks 77 or Social Distortion, you'll probably dig this too. **Jethrobt**

The Fake Boys – This Is Were Our Songs Live (Shield) CD

Well-written songs, drawing influences from every possible corner. Think Descendents, Jawbreaker and the Buzzcocks. Vocally it reminded me a bit of The Ramones at times too. And everyone who picks up this record is bound to hear something different. On the faster songs it's just great party music, on the slower tracks I tend to fall asleep. The Shield made my year with The Real Danger and This Routine Is Hell, but The Fake Boys will probably never leave the shelf again. **Martijn Welzen**

The Glitterati– Are You One Of Us? (DR2/Global Music Ltd.) CD

The UK's latest - and possibly greatest - glam-rock exports are back to give the world another taste of the rawk. I don't know how well they've caught on with 'the kids' yet, but the power-players are still taking notice: they jumped from GN'R/Metallica producer Mike Clink to Gallows/Slipknot producer Matt Hyde for this record. Longtime MM readers know that I'm a sucker for a few things, including glam, thrash, and The Wildhearts. Riffing on that, the packaging for 'Are You One Of Us?' alone has me hooked, with the pink neon-sign graphics (glam), recreation of THE classic Testament promo-photo pose (thrash), and the fact that one dude is sporting a Ramones-logo-style Wildhearts shirt. Musically, listen... I dig these guys, alright?!? I think the first album is bad-ass, but I think this album is better, start to finish. A record is only as good as its songs, and this record has 12 absolute winners, not a duff track in sight. The Glitterati manage to update the classic riff-n-hook glam thing with a great modern guitar sound, a healthy dose of subtlety (something that seemingly had to be absent in glam dayz past), lyrics that seem fairly smart and never cheesy (a real no-no in true glam), and vocals that call to mind awesome-yet-largely-unknown bands like Loudermilk, Gosling, and I Mother Earth more than any bands that actually wore lipstick

(And, for the record, I don't see any evidence of The Glitterati actually appearing glam; they actually kinda look more like 3 guys from Testament, 1 guy from Def Leppard circa 1983, and 1 guy from D-Generation.) Did I even say anything in this review? I hope so. 'Are You One Of Us' is one of the only things recorded in the past 15 years that I'm going to keep in my iPod for at least the next year... or until The Glitterati release another album. **The Impaler**



The Hostiles - Always Looking Forward (Self Released) CD

There's good ska and there's bad ska, and this falls in the latter category right from the start. The songs remind me so much of the "3rd Wave" of ska that permeated so much of the late 90's here in the US. It was all over eMpTyV and did nothing except make me think ska had officially kicked the bucket. The Hostiles are not bad musicians, their lyrics are pretty good and the recordings great, it's just that this has all been done before and is just re-treading on a style that should have stayed dead. I'd much rather hear bands try to capture what made ska exciting (like a lot of Japanese ska bands do) go back to the roots, like The Specials, English Beat and early Madness. We don't need another Reel Big Fish. If you like that 3rd wave of ska this might be your thing, but I'll go throw on some Specials or Oi Skull Mates. **Jethrobot**

The Irrepressibles - Mirror Mirror (Major Label/V2/Coop) CD

I am a big fan of baroque music, which is enchanting and also suggestive in the lyrics and melodic tones that something sinister lurks beneath the surface and the Irrepressibles are a band who certainly fit into such a description comfortably on their debut Mirror Mirror. On this album the ten piece performance orchestra compose elaborate polyphonic pop arrangements, which is at times totally bombastic (Splash! Splash! Splool!), though also makes way for the Tide's exquisite melodies and balladry.

I can see where such comparisons to Antony & The Johnsons and Scott Walker come from and would also name check Dead Western and early Tears For Fears, but ultimately The Irrepressibles create original and highly accessible music. The resulting album is entirely enjoyable and warrants repeated listens. **Lauren Barley**

The Maple Room - Cities of Hunger (Funtime) CD

Now is the time. Time to pledge your allegiance to European bands. Belgium might not have a strong military, huge political influence or even a good football team. They are, however, the country that's given us The Maple Room, a bunch of amazing musicians who have just delivered their third, and by far their best, album to date. The growth is mostly down to several new members, including a new singer, who put their stamp on things. The intensity and passion poured into these songs is something else. If you like punk rock you need to have this... No, if you like music you need to have this! Slowly but steadily these guys have been building their songs and fan base, with a determination that's hardly ever been witnessed or surpassed. True, there are a bunch of hardcore bands, and we don't even need to mention names, who have put all their anger and energy in amazing songs. The Maple Room however are also about musicianship, about trying new things and giving us, the listeners, value for money. You can call it emo, post hardcore or plain old punk rock. Call it what you will, it doesn't change the fact that there's something here for everyone to enjoy... **Martijn Welzen**

Therapy? - High Anxiety (Metal Mind) CD

The Band That Everyone In This Godforsaken World Should Be Listening To But Instead Has Chosen To Ignore Because People, Apparently, Are Idiots (trademark pending) has gotten a well-deserved pat on the shoulder from the good folks at Metal Mind with the reissue of 2003's 'High Anxiety' and 2004's 'Never Apologise Never Explain' (reviewed separately), with 24-bit remastering onto gold discs and lavish packaging. Well-deserving not because this band rules all (which they do), but because they accomplished the impossible with this pair of albums. Bands start to suck a little as they get older, right? That's what pretty much everyone thinks. (Of course, people are idiots. Proven fact.) Bands don't make great albums when they are 15+ years deep into a career. Do they? Therapy? do, and how! 'High Anxiety' is hands-down the best full-length album, when taken song-for-song and pound-for-pound, in this legendary act's catalogue... except maybe for their latest, 'Crooked Timber', but I digress.... Kicking off with the bombastic 'Hey Satan - You Rock', charging into the heavy/swirly 'Who Knows?', out-doing the legendary I Mother Earth with the grungy psychedelic beauty of 'Stand In Line'... and that's just the first 3 tracks! 'If It Kills Me' and 'Rust' are sure to remain in the band's live set until the end of time (a subliminal message for

the band indicating that they are not allowed to break up and go away... ever). Every song is a winner, and rock 'n' roll never sounded so damn good. **The Impaler**

Therapy? - Never Apologise Never Explain (Metal Mind) CD

Please refer to my review for 'High Anxiety' for basic background information on this reissue. For a sampling of my unabashed love for all things Therapy?, find absolutely any issue of MM or ask me about them next time you see me in your local Taco Bell. As I stated in my review of 'High Anxiety', I firmly believe that this pair of albums is the strongest 1-2 punch in the band's career, and while my tastes lean slightly toward the former, that opinion is not designed to take anything away from the gorgeous sonic fury that is 'Never Apologise Never Explain'. One listen to a few choice cuts like 'Rise Up', 'Die Like A Motherfucker', 'Here Be Monsters', and 'Last One To Heaven's A Loser' will confirm these seemingly bold statements to anyone with even an entry-level understanding of rock 'n' roll. Add tracks like 'Polar Bear' and 'Rock You Monkeys' and 'Dead', and the fate is sealed: you can't compete with this band or this record, so pawn your guitar and go get a job already. Buy a stack of Therapy? discs for the house, another stack for the car, a spare stack for your girlfriend, and get a lesson in how it's done. **The Impaler**

The Real Danger - Making Enemies (Shield) CD

The Real Danger's sophomore album is released just in time for Spring. I am going to call this one the must have barbecue record of the year. Catchy, up tempo punkrock dripping with cool, just like these juicy steaks drip with fat. Under the amazing looking artwork is a mature and intense punk rock album which touches base with Face To Face and Descendents. On the bands debut there were still some rough edges, but having played more shows then there are hairs (left) on my head, The Real Danger is now a well-oiled machine. Get out into the garden, play this at maximum volume and have a few sausages and a cold one. **Martijn Welzen**

The Retaliation Process - Downfall (Silverwolf Productions) CD

Even the darkest of metalheads want to hear catchy music every now and then. Life can't be that bleak all the time, now can it? To avoid having to betray your pitch black roots you can always turn to The Retaliation Process. This German band plays deathmetal with a hardcore edge in the, I'd almost say, poppiest way possible. You can sing, grunt and scream along with this debut CD, which is amazingly well produced. It's got influences from bands like Lamb of God, Devil Drive and As I Lay Dying. On the level of originality however, some work is in order and definitely needed. Still, it's quite an achievement... Playing sunny and cheerful death metal that is.... **Martijn Welzen**

The Rogue Nation - Be Your Own Rogue Nations (SuicideWatch.com Records) CD

Now this I like. Slightly wacky sounding old school hardcore (think a less thrashy Adrenalin OD) with intelligent, original lyrics of a personal/political persuasion tinged with enough humour to avoid preaching ('Paris Hilton Generation'). The Rogue Nation has that knack of sounding kinda familiar without actually coming across as a carbon copy of any particular band, especially the vocals of Chris Peigler. If I have one criticism it's that this could have been a few tracks shorter but hey, value for money is a rare thing these days right? **Ian Pickens**

The Safety Fire - Sections (Self Release) MCD

Unlike the amazing musicians who make up theThe Safety Fire, I don't know where to start with their new EP. There's so much going on, you have to to stay focused so you don't miss some of the records beauty. Everything and anything is possible when this London based band step up. Vast soundscapes that effortlessly erupt into frontal sonic assaults that baffles your senses. Vocally, the experience is just the same. From uneasy screaming bits to parts capable of lulling you to sleep. It is polyrhythmic to say the least, but at the same time doesn't lose sight of it's natural depth. The waters they dwell in never get murky, proudly showing everone the multi-coloured organisms that live beneath the surface. One the surface it mya seem chaotic, but there's a structure punctual as a Swiss clock ticking away underneath. Amazing! **Martijn Welzen**

The Smoking Hearts – Pride of Nowhere (Self Released)**CD www.myspace.com/smokinghearts**

13 songs of reckless abandon and high octane rock from the appropriately named Smoking Hearts. Fusing the raw assed rock n roll of the Spitfires with the punk energy of Gallows, tracks like the charmingly titled 'Thrash B4 Gash' and 'Shred and Destroy' dish out ferocious vocals and riffs, underpinned by some classy guitar solos and solid drumming. Think Towers of London if those pampered poseurs had any decent tunes or balls. The Smoking Hearts can pride themselves in a debut album well done. **Ian Pickens**



Death Metal/Grindcore is generally 'Marmite' music due to the straight ahead, uncompromising (some may argue fundamentalist), approach to writing and playing. So it's always impressive to find a band pushing the envelope, and in 'Still Life', Croat's True do just that. Incorporating a traditional Croatian folk instrument called a tambura throughout the seven songs on this release adds an extra dimension to the music. The replacement of guitar solos with the trebly warble of the tambura invokes an interesting juxtaposition to the blast-beat drums, growled vocals and down tuned guitars resulting in a mix of the technical death metal of Suffocation, the grind of Napalm Death and off kilter folk of SOAD. One of the most innovative acts in this genre I have heard in a long time. Highly recommended. **Ian Pickens**

The Startover - S/T (Engineer Records) CDEP

GAAAHHHHHHHH!!!! These are not the right records to send to me to review....do you like singy - emo - wanna be hardcore that permeates places like Hot Topic and is all over every pimply faced teens t-shirts? This is yet another clone in a sea of emo wank bands that make me insane the only difference here is the British accent, um yeah yawn. Apparently originality has hit another snag in the road. **Jethrobot**

This City – Black And Blue (Epitaph) CD SINGLE

I am a little curious to learn how this Brighton five piece ended up on Epitaph records, for both their European release of their debut We Were Like Sharks and now their single release Black and Blue. Maybe it is because they are striving for a similar sound to other bands on the label (Blood Brothers come to mind), and are clearly influenced by older bands like At The Drive In and arguably newer bands too like Hadouken (who incidentally they are supporting). Much like Hadouken, This City are another band trying to bridge the gap between recent commercialised accessible punk-rock and jilted youthful pop. I find their sound unoriginal but they definitely display signs of that winning formula (catchy guitar hooks, faux aggressive vocals and youthful energy) that have placed numerous bands of that ilk in the charts and all over Radio 1. I certainly have no doubt that they will achieve success and good luck to them but for me this single does not urge me to hear the full length and investigate further. **Lauren Barley**

This Routine Is Hell – The Verve Crusade (Shield) CD

'11 songs clocking just under 18 minutes!' it says here. That's a sign of quality in a hardcore band, isn't it? Good hardcore songs need to be a shot of adrenaline. A few seconds burst of aggression and straight to the point. Everything you don't need in getting your anger across, just thrown in a bag, and dumped in the nearest river with a grindstone tied tightly to it. Paint it Black are surgeons when it comes to losing deadweight, so were Minor Threat and yes, so are these young Dutch chaps. Pure quality, and only quality, with all natural ingredients, yet 'The Verve Crusade' is still damn tasty food for thought. **Martijn Welzen**

Timesword – Chains Of Sin (7Hard/Cargo) CD

Having spent over a decade of my life living in Europe, I am both familiar and comfortable with the eclectic tastes of European music fans, particularly those of the metal variety. And I certainly can't fault anyone for finding their own niche in this world; that's something to be celebrated. Who cares if the rest of the world doesn't understand?!? This is all truer when characterizing Italian metal fans, it seems, than anyone else. And thus comes Timesword. For me—an open-minded fan of all things musical, with tastes so wide and varied and eclectic that literally no one I have ever met can even come close to understanding me, but still an American by birth and general cultural sensibility (such as it is)—Timesword is just confusing. According to the press release, this is 'an intense work of art' built around 'the simple sound of a minor triad'... and there are references to Steve Vai, Mike Keneally, Dream Theater, and Secret Sphere. I'm not the resident prog expert, but I feel confident that the Italian metal scene is going to eat this record up. I don't know about the rest of us, though. **The Impaler**

Trail - City (Twistid Records) CD Single

Very radio friendly rock, like a bit harder edged Coldplay or U2. Catchy riffs but lacks a bit of originality. This band will always be that band that you say "they are nearly men". Get all the push from A&R men and management companies, support big bands BUT never get to be headliners, shame because you can see that they work hard & believe in what they do, but (there's that word again) they won't get anywhere. **Paul Hoddy**

True – Still Life (Greenger Records) CD

www.myspace.com/truezrud

TV Eye - Nice People (Hoax Records) CD

Amy: An album for fans of old-school punk: catchy, short, fast tunes driven by raspy voices and grinding guitars.

Jim: Which is exactly how they describe themselves. I think it's a lot of fun to listen to. The songs are short, fast, and catchy.

Amy: I think I just said that. Hey readers, our 7 year old likes them too. FYI, he's a Misfits, Ramones, Sex Pistols, and Bad Religion fan also.

Jim: Too bad these guys are in Sweden...chances are I'll never catch them live. It's a well-produced album, a lot of fun to listen to. I fully recommend it.

Amy: This one has the Dodge Family Endorsement. **Amy and Jim Dodge Jr.**

Two Choices – Have You Heard? /The Longest Journey (Self Released) CD

Two Choices is quite an ironic name when you think about. I have two choices, to like this or to not like it. Sadly it's the latter of these two. As the first song of the EP starts I can help but think that they've stolen their synth line from The Cult's She Sells Sanctuary and you can tell that's not the only classic rock influence. This CD is basically full of Bon Jovi influence which is a good thing for some, but it just doesn't capture me at all. There's no epic sing-a-longs like a Bon Jovi track yet all the elements are there. I think that they really need to go back and find something to give it that edge. It's not far off being great classic rock for a modern generation but it just needs that extra push. The mini album also included in this however is great. It's a more pop punk Four Year Strong style record and suits the band far better. If only they had kept this formula for the EP. **BT**

Wasted Life/Ratmonkey – Split (Dirty Old Man Records) CD

Two old school UK style punk bands belt out 14 tracks between them.

Wasted Life turn in six tracks of mid paced '77 punk with a pinch of street punk/Oi about the gruff, aggressive vocals and terrace chant backups. 'Gangland' being a particularly tight little number with a lovely little guitar lick running throughout. Good stuff. Ratmonkey play a tad pacier UK82 style, with more humorous lyrics that remind me of a tougher version of the Toy Dolls scrapping with GBH. Two bands which will undoubtedly go down a storm at the Rebellion/HITS fests and the toast of drunk punks everywhere.

Ian Pickens

With Chaos In Her Wake – Treason (Rising Records) CD

Hailing from Hull, England, With Chaos In Her Wake specialise in a mostly mid-paced down tuned style of Death Metalcore, or Wigger-Slam as it's called now, with a pretty much constant mix of either guttural or rasping, or both, vocalising over the top. That about sums it up, it's neither better nor worse than that. Musically it's very tight and coherent, lots of nice drum rolls, fills, blasts and likewise a lot of fast riffing in an almost mid-paced Death style. There are occasional snippets of grind style beat downs, bass slides and little nuances to keep things interesting and things never descend into the usual Metalcore banality. There's enough Death Metal influence to keep things motoring. Unfortunately I find the near constant appearance of the rather one dimensional rasping and growling vocalist overpowering and underwhelming in equal measure. Really, the music needs to be left to breathe a little more, although when that does happen, it does become a little more obvious that there's little invention in the riffs themselves outside of the standard chug and sweep motif. A perfectly respectable album for a new young band and plenty of hints of talent, variety and potential for the future, but this is a saturated market place and there's little here that stands out. **Chest Rock-well**

THE FLATLINERS

Canada, the home of some great legendary bands such as Fucked Up, DOA, Cancer Bats, Belvedere, This Is A Stand Off to name a few and here we have another uprising operation coming from that great land in the form of Flatliners. Hailing from the Richmond Hill and Brampton areas of Ontario, they are not a new band (they have been going since 2002) but one that is starting to get a name for themselves so I decided to chew the fat with Scott and Chris from the band.

Interviewed by Pete Williams.

MM: So let's begin with the expected opener. Who are Flatliners and give us the lowdown on you guys?

Chris: We are a band from Canada... We are handsome gentlemen (laughs) and we like to play punk rock music. Sadly there isn't much of a story. Scott and I met in Kindergarten and then we grew up in school with our bass player and then we met our drummer so we are kind of childhood friends and always wanted to be in a band together and not do anything else really. Right after we graduated we were kind of like "oh well let's do this"

Scott: Where we are from there really isn't a lot to do you know? Nothing other than buy a load of shitty equipment and start playing at our parent's houses. So that's what we did and then we did shows at the weekend which then turned into week nights when we had school the next day and then we started missing school due to these shows and then after a while we decided to start touring.

MM: You guys have a new album out on Fat Wreck called Cavalcade. Time to become the salesmen and tell us a bit about the record.

Chris: I was kind of a nightmare to record so people should buy it because they feel sorry for us (laughs). We ended up doing it between tours. We originally recorded 14 songs last summer before our last European tour and we were pretty excited about it and thought it was done and then we started talking to our label about it and everyone thought that maybe we could keep working on it so we worked on 4 more songs and 3 of them made the album in the end. We recorded those like last fall, last December so there is this big chunk... There was this whole gap between the original recordings and the last few which was weird and although we didn't set out to do it that way and wouldn't want to again but as much stress we went through at that time it kind of worked out as a blessing in disguise. We've got some of the heaviest songs we've written on this record and likewise some of the mellowest songs we've ever written so I think although we didn't try to set out to do anything specific but we ended up with a pretty eclectic one.

Scott: It's probably the most cluster fuck of genres on one record (laughs) but I enjoy that in a record. Who really wants to hear the same genre over and over again on a record?

MM: This is the third release on Fat Wreck so how did you guys hook up with them?

Scott: They had a Canadian representative a while back called Melanie, who still works for the label but a while back she was always talking about us and we were friends with her for a while and then when we were doing demos for our second album "The Great Wake" it kind of made sense to throw her a couple of demos with some possibility that it may make it to Fat Mike but we weren't expecting to hear anything. Then a few days later and they liked the songs and wanted to hear more stuff so we ended up just demoing our entire record in like 2 days. We just went head down and really fast. They were kind of shitty live versions of the songs and he was like "yeah let's just put those out" He liked them and wanted to put them out but we were kind of like "nah we want to go back and work on them".

Chris: That just really blew our minds as he was really excited about those super raw awful demos but we were pretty persistent that we wanted to work

on them but it was starting to look like they were going to put out our record. We were really stoked as we grew up on Fat Wreck bands because they kind of shaped our way of punk rock with bands like NOFX, No Use For A Name, Strung Out, Lagwagon, Mad Caddies, you know all the original bands on there so it was like an honor to be with them you know? There's none of this huge over complicated shit like 360 deals or any of that and it feels like we are working with friends now.

MM: How important do you feel having a label like Fat Wreck backing you is in this day and age especially when a lot of music is becoming more accessible via the web? What do you feel is the main advantage and disadvantage points of mp3 over the physical format? Which do you prefer?

Scott: It's funny to see CD's going out so fast but then it's good to see sales of vinyl and LPs going up but it's going to happen as everyone pretty much has MP3 players anyway plus I suppose when you end up scratching the CD from carrying it around and what not and when it's one of those super rare releases as well so it helps you keep your vinyl and CDs for home and your MP3s for when you are away.

Chris: Yeah and I think the whole music industry is fucked now. No one really sells albums anymore... not even like the biggest like the likes of Metallica. I remember when the whole napstar thing started out. Big bands

like them are starting to piss and moan about it which I feel is a bit unfair as they sell shit loads so they don't really have to worry about it but with bands like us who aren't millionaires then we have to tour a lot and work even harder for it and like that's all you can really do is keep touring. So that's where Fat are good for us as they are always super supportive of their bands touring and that's what a label wants to hear from a band like "we're going on tour forever" you know but I suppose it's a bummer that records don't sell but on a positive side I suppose it forces bands and labels to try and be as creative as possible. I also think it's going to help keep prices down as no one is really going to want to pay \$10 for CD anymore when they can get it for free so I really dig that and totally back Fat Wreck over this.

MM: You hail from Ontario in Canada. What is it about Canada that breeds such great bands (like DOA, Belvedere and especially Fucked Up and Cancer Bats who are also from Ontario)? How much of an influence do you feel your hometown is to you and your music if any?

Scott: We're just fed up of people making fun of Canadians like on South Park (all laughing at this point and cue loads of Terrance and Phillip jokes and impressions).

Chris: Yeah all our songs are just hate songs to all the people who do that (laughs).

Scott: I don't know man... it's hard to say as especially where we are from there are loads of bands as there are so many sub cities.

Chris: It kind of reminds me of England or the UK in general. There are a lot of cities here close together. You can drive like an hour here and then 2 hours there and be in a totally different city. Same as over here like we were in Bristol 2 days ago which is like an hour from here and then we have a few close together over the next few days but still far apart you know so they can go to their home town if they want to but they're not too far away from another show. I suppose we were lucky like that where we are from because we could do that like we would watch 4 shows and travel a total of five hours you know. Plus there's not much to do in rural Canada like there's not much to do in rural anywhere so maybe that's why there's a load of bands that come out of Canada.

MM: What else do you feel influences you the most both in life and music?



Chris: It's a pretty cheesy answer but it's hard to recognize what influences you and doesn't after a while because we are always in this mode so I feel like...

Scott: I guess we all influence each other in a way. We tour quite heavily so like being away is kind of a big influence and being on the road is pretty much it.

Chris: Yeah like most of the songs, once we have the record pretty much wrapped up we listen back and feel like this disconnection but at the same time feeling part of something so it's kind of a weird flawed feeling but yeah I definitely feel a lot of the record is related to that. I mean we spent years away from home so that's how it works. We've been on tour since February and it's now like June... We go home next week but only for 12 days and then we're back out on tour for 3 weeks and we have a really good time but yeah it can take its toll. You have your good days and bad but we aren't going to do anything else with our lives so may as well do this.

MM: You guys must have some tour experience under your belts now so what have been your most memorable tours for the right reasons and for the wrong reasons?

Scott: Our first tour we ever done (laughs) was probably our most memorable for the wrong reasons. We made it all the way to Montreal, which is about 5 hours East of Toronto and we run out of money so we had to come back. That's probably the most memorable for the wrong reasons. We were pretty lucky to jump on a few tours with NOFX so they are pretty memorable.

Chris: Those are for the right and the wrong reasons (laughs). Those tours were awesome though as they took us under their wing pretty quickly which was awesome and we had grown up listening to those bands so to be on tour with them was cool. They were really generous and really cool and NOFX are an amazing band so it was a blast. Also I guess it's like when we always go somewhere new. Like when we first came to Europe and the UK you get a really excited feeling. We also recently got to go to Australia for the first time and Japan so things like that we are never really going to forget. It's pretty unreal when you think about it.

MM: What have been the best and worst pieces of advice you have been given regarding touring / being in a band?

Chris: Man that's a tough one... I guess the best or good piece of advice we've been given is get receipts for everything because the first few tours we did we got all this merch from a merch company and they would like float us so we didn't have to pay them right away. Same thing with the label and that kind of stuff and we would like sell merch and get the money from the shows and our manager and agents would be back in the states and we would lose track of what money was who's and we were like "we have all this money" so we used to spend it. We were so bad and young and naive so that was a pretty quick learning process there. Bad pieces of advice... I don't know man...

Scott: Probably the first band van we ever bought (all laughing)

Chris: Yeah that van was pretty bad.

MM: Who would you consider to be the true kings of punk rock and why? Would you care to indulge who you think are faking the punk?

Chris: I think Johnny Cash was pretty punk rock even though he didn't really play punk rock. I think he was pretty much one of the first people to shake people up. People say Elvis was but I say cash was. What he did felt really wholesome. On the whole faking the punk thing... man there are so many bands dude. I'd say a lot of these bands on the Warped tour that we are about to do and I feel there are a lot of bands on there that are popular on the scene but not really punk rock. I saw a poster for a Warped tour date in Toronto the other day and I think I knew 3 of the names on there. I understand why some of them are on the bill as they are guaranteed ticket sales at the end of the day but some of them are so fucking disgusting like all these bands sound the same and have similar names, the worst haircuts and synthesizers and shit like that wearing Misfits T-Shirts and I'm thinking these guys have never probably heard a Misfits record in their lives.

MM: You guys are off on the Warped tour soon I see. Which do you personally prefer, the club touring or tours like Warped tour and why?

Scott: Oh club tours definitely. Purely because you get up right close and have fun. It's more intimate. Plus it seem easier than things like the Warped tour.

Chris: Oh sure and I'm not knocking things like the Warped tour but I don't think we could survive the whole thing that's why we are only doing part of it. I don't want to say we will never do it but it would be tough and it's a lot of work. We wouldn't be on a bus or anything. We don't have a crew or anything and it would be just us and our buddy Dorian who's our merch guy who goes everywhere with us so it's weird as you turn up at like 10 in the morning, set up this merch tent sort everything out by putting posters and spreading the word... on one hand it's cool as it's still sort of like DIY and your pushing yourselves really hard to get people to come see your band so it is like a throw back to how punk rock began but at the same time when you get used to a club tour you used to a club tour. The Warped tour is going to be fun though as we have some friends on it and it always turns into a booze cruise circus.

MM: Why do you think tours like Warped are important to be a part of?

Chris: It's really all about getting out to people who potentially wouldn't normally check us out on club tours and reach out to them. I guess that's why a lot of bands our size do things like this to try and grab new listeners.

MM: What do have lined up next for Flatliners?

Chris: After that I think we're just going to take a break for a while as this tour has been a monster. We're going to release another 7" on Fat in the fall... other than that I'm not too sure. We have a pretty simple plan with our band and that is to play shows when we can.

MM: Parting comments...

Chris: The Welsh language confuses the shit out of me. So much so that I was blown away by it and now have to learn and understand it and I feel if I can do that then I can do anything. I don't mean that in any disrespectful kind of way I just think it's awesome.

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MASTER MUSICIANS OF BUKKAKE

Master Musicians Of Bukkake is such an enormous entity to grapple with in one interview. You are shrouded in mystique; the music itself is incredibly dense, the image so fantastically striking, the live shows, well, they are like nothing I have ever seen before. I am compelled to not only write about you but interview you to find out more...

Interview by Lauren Barley

MM: Let's start with the composition of Master Musicians Of Bukkake, comprising members of Sun City Girls, Earth, Asva, Burning Witch (to name a few)...it reads like the perfect marketing sticker and yet despite the fact that individuals are coming from different bands/musical projects as well as other joint ventures, this particular formation seems to be

ment to ideas and honouring emptiness as form. Very rarely are we just jamming for the sake of making sound. There is always intent be it abstract or perfectly clear in the larger narrative that threads it all together.

MM: Musically, I detect a middle Eastern European sound, often in Brad's vocals (which at times seem to replicate instruments used in some middle eastern compositions I have heard like the Egyptian reed instrument the double Mijwiz), is that an accurate observation? What more can you say about the influences/origins of your music?

MMOB: Yes, I think each of us bring a different sonic influence, there is for sure a love of Mid-eastern rock and classical forms. I think more than anything we like to create the bands we always wished existed, grunge bands



a collective of like-minded musicians who seem to be incredibly well connected not only on a musical level but also on a spiritual and intellectual level. Would that be a fair assessment?

MMOB: We have all been very fortunate to be a part of some really amazing music that's for sure. It has been quite amazing that so much of the music each of us has done together and apart has even been heard, I don't know about marketing stickers but I do know about hard work and there has been a lot of that with the bands you mentioned and with MMOB. We all share a reverence for creating in the end. Call it "spiritual or intellectual" we are compelled to do it. MMOB just gives us all as a unit a place to exorcise the more exotic tendencies and philosophies that we share, a place to roam free for better or for worse. This band is our opportunity to step way outside the confines of work or "rock musicians".

MM: There is definitely something totally special going on when I listen to the music on record or watch it unfold live, it is utterly magical. I gather that the first album was recorded in a number of locations (outdoors and in several indoor locations as well as in the studio) with musicians free-floating in a (sort of) jamming session that spanned many, many hours, is this correct? Can you reveal whether the compositions that we hear on record and live are mostly improvised or do you collectively map your ideas out in advance?

MMOB: That is really great to hear that response from the music live and on recording. The starting work that MMOB does could be called improvised I suppose much like a spontaneous conversation could be considered improvising. However at this point it is a conversation that is in its own unique language spoken by a few. The ideas can start from no form and quickly solidify on stage or in the studio; we have no strict process except non attach-

from Egypt, Black Metal bands from Tibet on and on. The sound is really influenced from a "what if" mentality from our love of so many different kinds of music from so many places. Ultimately even though we set out to make something that to us might be Turkish or Thai influenced or what have you it really just gets turned into something else completely out of the constraints of these labelled "world music" influences. Travel also has a lot to do with it. The sounds and sights you see and hear when travelling in some remote places in the world then trying to reflect on them later. Some of the music we create and the narrative of the current TOTEM trilogy is deeply impacted by the state of the world bringers of light and dark and the wars all around us spiritually and culturally. I won't go so far as to say it's a reaction against the "new world order" agenda but that is a good place to start. The death of tradition and mysticism and the rise of the United religions Initiative movement also play a large roll. The cult of cults and the cults of war.

MM: I know it is an obvious thing to reference but your image is something to behold and maintains the mystery of the band. Where did that particular costume choice come from? Does it help you to channel the music that you create? And is it a reference of something specific?

MMOB: When you wear a uniform on stage it helps relieve you of the "me" tendencies that can pollute music. It is a way of maintaining presence without the distractions of having to perform as "self". It is way more of an anti-mystery in my opinion, a reminder that the music and listening is more crucial than the fashion of the performers. The reference is an oblique homage to so much I don't even know where to begin, Bon cults, foolish Victorian wizards, confused theosophists, new agers, black metal bands, new wave, Devo, the Residents, Jordorwsky...it's all there and more. It is really interesting to see people attach their own ideas and perceptions on it being

dualistic, dark or light or mysterious. For us it is Dada and neutral. A way of channelling our confusing desperate sources into an experience that can be taken in many ways based on the receiver. A way of unifying intent between members to evade the trappings of "performance". Believe me no one wants to see us with out the hats we are mutants....ha,ha

MM: I am very excited about the trilogy you are in the midst of releasing, Totem One is an absolutely stunning piece of work from a musical and artwork point of view and Totem Two is even better in my opinion. How have you developed musically between the two albums? Have you already began to work on the third?

MMOB: The trilogy has had a sort of planned narrative all along all be it oblique. Two is very much the darker mellow side to the more delusional euphoric Totem one. Three will be yet another shift that will be revealed in time. We are happy that people are enjoying these records, Ultimately in one sitting the three will make even more sense and be even more epic. Hopefully we are always evolving and making compelling music...

MM: I gather you have also just recorded a Latitudes session at Southern Studios, the concept of which is to record and mix a record in one day. Many musicians have approached this differently, some produce complete improvisations and others record covers or reinterpretations of their own songs. What and how did you record? I guess we can expect some pretty incredible artwork to accompany that too.

obelisk surrounded by stacks of money and burger king crowns. We are lucky that Seldon has the time to indulge us.

MM: Master Musicians Of Bukkake live is also something to behold, the way you all approach the stage positions the audience as purveyors of some kind of ceremonial performance. It is cathartic in a way that I have not experienced before. How are you received when you tour? When are you coming back to the UK?

MMOB: We get many reactions, everyone positive to me. I like that people find the show ritualistic. Honestly I can only hope that we are making people pay attention to experience in a way that some bands don't get to. With the feeling of pho ritual however comes the responsibility of making sure that people don't ever think that something actually religious or shamanistic is happening. Too many bands these days trying to bring a sort of new age trance to the stage. I hope our show can break the trances that everyday life lays in us and increase presence in us and the listener, trancing out is causing enough problems. Quite honestly now is a good time to be aware.

MM: What do you enjoy most about being in Master Musicians Of Bukkake?

MMOB: The Hats and all the money we make....ha,ha.

MM: Finally, I feel I should ask (despite it being an obvious thing to do and only because curiosity has got the better of me), why Bukkake?



MMOB: I am pretty excited about this, we wrote two new pieces. One a lush canyon of melody and the other an occult tribute to NEU! and Kraut-rock. There is still some mixing to do but it should be out this year! the art will look good I can hope.

MM: Who designs your artwork?

MMOB: Currently Seldon Hunt is creating the art for the Totem series, the Totem of the religion of the future. Although we could only hope that it will look that good. The religion of the future will more likely look like a grey

MMOB: Well this comes up often. The combination of the sacred and profane. It was a moment and the name stuck. It is way less offensive to me than rock bands that use images of Christ, or Buddha or name themselves after sacred cultural things and concepts that they are barely related to or knowledgeable of simply out of a need to feel "mystical".... And even less offensive than the repeated use of bloody women on Metal bands record covers what's with that anyway? A friend pointed that out now I see it everywhere. Honestly are any of us that innocent as to be offended by a Japanese noodle.

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DEES GUYS

Dees Guys right here are rapidly taking over the world, or at least the Hollywood portion of it, or for the most part pervading the cyber-masses like some aberrant comedic bacterium, or at bare minimum landing themselves on the front page of blip.tv while likewise dazzling the legions at funnyordie (.com) - or something, anything, along these lines, anyhow. Lines including, but in no way, shape, or form limited to: man hugs, body acrylics, wanton soup, shell-shocks, homeless Marxist dancers, metaphorical burrito wisdom, grandpa dicks, bacon thievery, 'sick-ass' phones, wallaby petting, Twi-hards, voodoo spells, Corey Feldman, lunchables, hair-lock clarity, Indian leg wrestling (yes, that did just read 'Corey Feldman'), and so on.... Including, but in no way, shape, or form limited to. These lines. In a vague attempt to wrap my head around all this, I typed up an interview (this one, specifically) for Dees Guys writer / director Michael Livingston and e-mailed it to him, but rather decided to tell you, the reader, right about now that we 'recently sat down' some place together in Hollywood and hashed it out. You know, some place cool like a seamy, musky - yet exceptionally velvety - dive bar, or some sketchy hole-in-the-wall Mexican joint where gringos like us don't usually tread; or better yet, maybe even a place of illustrious Hollywood folklore - such as the Rainbow, Viper Room, or Chateau Marmont - over a few oxymoronic 'small mountains' of blow replete with the requisite pair of hookers and a thousand-dollar bar tab. Now we're getting somewhere. Insert any of the previously mentioned locales here, and we're well underway....

Interview by Kyle Grant

MM: Hello, Michael. Nice to see you again. The series *Nothing Bad Ever Happens to Nick* seems to be the central focus of Dees Guys at the moment. How did this initially come about? I mean, does *Nothing Bad*. (really) *Ever Happen To Nick*. (ever?)

Michael: Well, we had been doing sketch comedy under the name "Dees Guys" for a couple of years. We did a couple live shows in Hollywood, and we made a few short films, but we wanted to move in another direction. We had wanted to do a web series that was more of a sitcom with recurring characters for a while, but we didn't have any ideas. Nick, in real life, is my roommate, and yes, for the most part, nothing bad ever happens to him. He has an amazing amount of dumb luck in almost every area of life, and because I am a bitter jealous prick, this often gets on my nerves. One day Nick was telling me a story about how he was slacking off at work, but his co-worker got in trouble for it instead of him, and he actually ended up pulling a hot girl's number out of the situation while his innocent co-worker was almost fired because of his actions. I said to him, "We should make a show called *Nothing Bad Ever Happens to Nick*," and the idea was born.

MM: What's the most gratifying part of the creative process for you?

Michael: The most gratifying part of the creative process for me is witnessing people's reactions. If we screen our show to a room full of people and everyone is laughing and loving it, there is no greater feeling than that, know-

ing that people are thoroughly entertained by your work. If they hate it on the other hand, then I enjoy telling everyone to fuck off and kicking them out of my house.

MM: Do you tend to subscribe to the conventional wisdom that there are only two kinds of film in this world, good and bad? What constitutes a 'good' film, in your opinion? And moreover, what are some things that you feel generally make a film 'bad'?

Michael: I was unaware that there was such "conventional wisdom." I think there are good and bad films, and everything in between. I think the definition of what is a good or bad film is really up to the viewer. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, after all. Having said that, however, I am extremely opinionated, and I am always right, so if I think the movie sucks, it does, and anybody who likes it is an idiot. What constitutes a bad film to me - and

therefore a bad film to the universe because I am always right - is any film that combines the words 'romantic' and 'comedy.'

MM: Please excuse the *High Fidelity* set-up here, but if you could cast your Top 5 All-Time Favorite Comedic Actors for a project, who would you cast, and why?

Michael: Hmmm...
Number 1: Michael Showalter. Reason: *Wet Hot American Summer*.
Number 2: Jim Carrey. Reason: *Cable Guy*.
Number 3: Ben Stiller. Reason: *Cable Guy*.
Number 4: Jason Schwartzman. Reason: *Rushmore*.
At 5: Val Kilmer OR Emilio Estevez. Reasons: *Real Genius* and *Repo Man*.

MM: How do you take your peanut butter, Michael? Creamy, crunchy, or stringy, slimy, stir-it-your-

damn-self organic-y?

Michael: I like my peanut butter creamy, and chock full of cancer-causing hydrogenated oils. Screw that organic noise.

MM: How does Hollywood look for an aspiring filmmaker currently? Do you think there's more or less opportunity to reach a broad audience now as opposed to, say, ten years ago, when the internet had yet to have such a significant impact on the industry?

Michael: Hollywood right now is a very interesting time. On one hand, there are a lot more opportunities for aspiring filmmakers because of the internet - you know, YouTube and the amazing new video cameras on the market. With these tools anyone can make professional films and have them seen by millions of people. This wouldn't have been possible even 5 years ago. On the other hand, however, everyone and their mom is now making films and putting them on YouTube, so the competition is tenfold what it was, which makes it very difficult for good talent to rise to the top of the pile and gain recognition. I do feel that overall there is more opportunity now - especially in television - than there was five or ten years ago, as filmmaking was virtually inaccessible to most people then. You don't even need to get picked up by a major studio anymore to be successful. If you have a popular web show



on YouTube now, you can make millions and never need anything more than a webcam.

MM: That said, where is the industry headed over the next ten years? Do you see it shifting even further toward a more overall independent entity?

Michael: I definitely see the industry shifting toward a more independent entity. More and more *Blair Witch* style movies have come out (like *The Fourth Kind*) and are making massive amounts of money because they are extremely cheap to produce. I think the major studios will continue to shrink and more and more independent production companies will rise, doing primarily web content. I think the studios will always be around for the big theatrical blockbusters, but I think the world of indie cinema is going to be placed solely in the hands of these small production companies in the form of web-based content. I think we will see less and less small-budget films in theatres and more of them on the web. The blockbusters will get bigger, and the indies will get smaller.

MM: Who wins in a fight? A Flock of Seagulls or New Order?

Michael: A Flock of Seagulls. Definitely.

cious (we filmed the whole thing in his own house). He is really funny and an all-around good guy.

MM: Because you're a huge '80s buff (like myself), this second *High Fidelity* question won't seem so ridiculous; so here we go: If you were to start a band with any five '80s film characters (e.g. Marty McFly, who's strictly off-limits at this juncture due to his quite obvious and clearly extensive musical talent - plus, given your '09 Halloween costume, you're a bit partial to him, I'm guessing), who's playing what, and why?

Michael: Okay, well if I can't have Marty McFly on lead guitar, then this whole enterprise is fruitless because I want Marty McFly on lead fucking guitar! I suppose I could settle for *The Secret to My Success* Michael J. Fox if I must. I'd also like *Teen Wolf* Michael J. Fox as a background dancer. I'll take any member of The Dagers from *Thrashin'* on guitar or drums just because I know they all can rock. Ferris Bueller on lead vocals, because his voice is just so damn beautiful. And I want Kevin Bacon or Ren McCormack from *Footloose* on the sax. Do I really need to explain that one?

MM: What's next for Dees Guys? Any new series in the works?

Michael: Well, we're working on Season 2 of *Nothing Bad Ever Happens to*



MM: Alright, inquiring readers want to know (and I'm one of them), how in the hell did you end up working with Corey Feldman (who delivered an outstanding performance, by the way)?

Michael: Corey Feldman. Now there's a funny story. In addition to all this web noise, I also work as a freelance editor and videographer. And through some friends, I ended up getting a gig filming Corey Feldman's album release party for his band's latest album. I filmed the gig, met Corey, and offered to edit the footage for him for free. I worked with him closely editing this performance all for free. To return the favor, he agreed to cameo for us in our show. He was a pleasure to work with - very accommodating and gra-

Nick, and we do have a couple other series in the works. Also, we have some random old school Dees Guys sketches coming soon and a ton of other stuff, too. Our production plate is full, so keep watching!

MM: Any last remarks, Michael (viz., don't forget to plug the hell out of your show and/or give a 'big shout-out' to your dog, Toaster)?

Michael: Yes, of course! Make sure you check out all our web shows at Please visit our YouTube page and subscribe: . You can also follow us on twitter: . You know, all that noise. By the way, my dog Toaster is the shit! I am soon releasing a web comic based on awkward photos of her, so stay tuned for that! That should do it, amigo!

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STRUCK OUT

Interview by Ian Pickens

MM: Introduce yourselves?

AJ: I'm AJ, lead guitar and main vocals.

Beast: I'm the Legg Beast; I sit at the back and beat the fuck outta things.

AJ: The fat one on bass is Jambon and the skinny one on guitar is Leeroy.

Beast: Also known as Slinky.

AJ: Yeah, cos he's pretty much useless, but mildly entertaining when you push him down a flight of stairs.

AJ: Oh yeah, gotta love motorhead. As for the cultural stuff, my main thing is religion, I'm a pretty outspoken anti-theist and that comes through in a lot of the stuff I write. Obviously there's war, politics and class, but if you want my opinion on that then just listen to our stuff, it's all in there.

MM: What motivates you guys to play punk rock? What's the Neath/West Wales scene like? Are there many bands/venues/zines over there?

Beast: Well, obviously it's the best way to get across opinions on stuff, it's a good way of getting across how pissed off something makes you, and you can really take it out on the drums and guitars, or throwing mic stands and



MM: LOL, How long has Struck Out been together as a band? Were any of you in other bands prior to SO? What are your main influences not just music – political, social, cultural etc?

AJ: Just over a year technically, Slinky and Jambon were in a band called Flood Warning and me and the beast were in Cunt.

Beast: Well, Can't Understand Never Tried, but yeah, cunt.

AJ: But CUNT split up last year, and Flood Warning brought me in on rhythm guitar, but within 2 weeks we'd scrapped the drummer they had and brought in the Beast

Beast: Yeah man he was fucking terrible couldn't play anything over 14bpm and even then it was nowhere near in time.

AJ: LOL. Yeah, so anyway, we scrapped the old songs and wrote some new ones, came up with a new name and it turned out to be a good coalition of bands.

Beast: Well, better than a government coalition anyways.

AJ: As for influences, me and the beast are full on punk rockers, both well into the sorta Epitaph and Hellcat stuff, as well as a lot of UK stuff like GBH, Sick On The Bus and the Restarts.

Beast: Whereas Slinky is well into Dream Theatre and that sorta stuff.

AJ: And Jambon listens to, well... Lady Gaga, although his favourite song at the moment is that webuyanycar.com shit.

MM: LOL. Yeah I could imagine he's dig that after seeing him live, he's pretty intense.

Beast: Oh, and Motorhead

shit, punk rock kinda comes naturally to you when you feel like that. Plus battering a snare is really fun.

AJ: When I was about 16 I remember seeing a band called the Viva Knievils, who are now pretty much the Sick Livers, and I remember seeing Ginge going nuts around the room trashing the place with these loud as fuck guitars behind him and I thought "I wanna do that".

Beast: The Neath scene was a lot more fun back then, you had Lethargy just starting out and The Last Republic, back when they were Kardomah, and there was How About Trout.

AJ: These days it's a lot of metal, metal and more metal.

Beast: ..or indie

AJ: I fucking hate indie, but yeah, most of the bands in Neath these days are just doing the same old shit. There's a few good ones lurking around down there, like Touchfinder, World Vs World and Llinos, but I think we're the only Punk band down there.

Beast: As for venues, there's pretty much only one that's worth playing and that's the Duke, it's a dive, but it's got so much character.

MM: Yeah, that's a great venue; almost like a mini TJs or CBGBs

AJ: Yeah. Most venues we've played up Cardiff way have been Wetherspoons, Varstiy in Roath, the Old Library and the Blackweir Tavern, no character to any of them, it's gotta be pretty hard to get into a band in a place like that

Beast: It's gotta be hard to WANT to get into a band in a place like that.

MM: The band aspires to quite a stringent DIY ethic; how important is that

to you as individuals? Do you apply that philosophy to your lives outside of the band?

AJ: Well the thing with DIY is that a lot of people think it's hard, or that you need all this fancy equipment to record a demo. You really don't, you can record a whole demo for like £70, and then have the stuff to record as many EP's as you want after that. Sure the quality is better in a professional studio, but it's a demo for fuck's sake. Plus the biggest advantage is that you have complete control over everything, you're the ones to decide if the drums are good enough, if the song needs to be redone or whatever. You're not restricted by time limits or whether the sound guy thinks your guitar should sound different. If you're doing it to get into the charts the go get yourself signed, but we're not really into that, we're not one of those bands who will give everything to get signed, we just love playing.

Beast: And there's the satisfaction of having done it all yourself, like with modifying my car, yeah I could take it to a garage, but they won't put the heart into it like I would, I'm a kinda learn-as-you-go sorta person

AJ: you mean a cowboy?

Beast: LOL. Yeah man, a jack of all trades and a master of none.

MM: The recording of your demo 'Not My Fucking War' was done on an absolute shoestring; live into four mics; were you happy with the end result? If you could re-record it what would you have done differently?

AJ: Wouldn't quite call it a shoestring.

Beast: Yeah it was more like a frayed length of rope.

AJ: Well, we kinda cocked up the drums a bit, we had them all on one track, which sounded fine on their own, but once everything else was in the mix it was impossible to just boost the snare or cymbals or whatever.

Beast: Yeah I would have much preferred to record the drums on separate tracks, but considering my drum kit only cost £100 and it's like a million years old I think it sounded pretty good. There's a hidden track on the demo that we recorded professionally using a half decent drum kit, and that's kinda what we're expecting from the next demo.

MM: I've seen you guys a couple of times now and you seem to be improving with each show; are you practising more or it is just naturally tightening up the more you play as a band?

AJ: Well we haven't really been practicing more; we still just do 2 hours a week, but we have been playing a hell of a lot of gigs.

Beast: ...and through March and April we took 2 months off to work on new songs

AJ: Yeah which worked out really good, we've gotten a lot better at putting songs together and knowing what will work live and what won't.

Beast: We've also just gotten really comfortable playing together now, me and AJ have been playing together for close to 8 years so we know each other really well, but I think over the last few months Jambon and Slinky have really settled into our way of playing.

AJ: Yeah, coming from captain tempo

Beast: .. Then try writing riffs in some sort of normal rhythm you spazz.

MM: I felt the demo didn't really do you justice; will the next one be such a lofi recording or are you planning on a more polished production?

AJ: Well, in September I'll be starting music tech in Swansea institute, which gives us full access to top notch recording studios as well as the lecturers to help us out, we'll still be doing it ourselves, I'll just be a professional in training.

Beast: Although we may try and do another one over the summer

MM: On a flyer for the show in the Old Library, Cardiff Struck Out were described as an 'angry political death punk'; is this a term you applied to yourselves? I thought the term death punk was a bit misleading as it kinda suggested more of a Goth/horror punk sound, like the Misfits or Christian Death, you guys reminded me more of a mix between Rancid and the Casualties; fair comment?

AJ: LOL, what the fuck is death-punk?

Beast: We've never heard anyone call us that.

AJ: I didn't even know there was a poster for that, although we've worked with the promoter a few times and he keeps saying we're too heavy to play with punk bands and too punk to play with metal bands. But yeah I think a cross between the Casualties and Rancid is about right, they're 2 bands I listen to a lot, although Rancid's newer stuff is utter bollocks.

Beast: Yeah since they hooked up with Good Charlotte they've gone downhill.

AJ: I like a lot of hardcore like Raised Fist and Jesus Of Spazzareth, but none of their stuff influences my song writing or playing, I tend to base it around a cross between Bad Brains and Social Distortion, with Rancid style bass lines

Beast: I think most of my drumming influence comes from Brooks Wackerman from Bad Religion

AJ: yeah there's no horror punk or "death punk" in there

MM: One of the things I found annoying about that show (and many others) is that the very first band brought quite a few people with them, who all left after they played which is pretty damn ignorant in my opinion; how did you feel about that, after all they were all from Cardiff and you guys stayed right until the end despite having the furthest to travel?

AJ: Yeah it's pretty shitty, but at the end of the day you can't force people to stay

Beast: It tends to happen with us a lot when we play in Neath, our fans only tend to turn up just before our set, so we started telling them the wrong times so they'd turn up while other bands were playing.

AJ: I think it's especially shit when even the bands leave, it's fucking disgraceful, you'll just make a bad name for yourself if you do things like that.

Beast: We played up in Hobos in Bridgend, and there was only the bands there, and some of them started leaving after they played and by the time the last band went on it was just us and the bar staff.

AJ: I think some bands think it makes them look good in front of promoters if people only watch them, but what promoters really want is people who stay all night and spend money at the bar, cus if you run a night in a bar and nobody is buying beer for most of the night, they're not gonna ask you to run another night. We love watching the Sick Livers so we were gonna stay anyway, I just think a lot of people missed out that night cus it was a really good line-up.

MM: That particular show had a nice mix of Ska/Punk/tripped out stoner funk and rock n roll; do you enjoy playing diverse bills or is it harder trying to connect with a disparate crowd?

AJ: I don't think the welsh punk scene is big enough to keep playing with punk bands all the time, I mean, it's great to be really into the bands you're playing with, but it's better to be playing to a bigger audience, every band you play with has fans that are ripe for the stealing.

Beast: And with a bit of luck punk rock is what they've been waiting for, some people just wanna listen to stuff that's heavy and intense with a pounding beat, and punk is a lot different live than it is on CD, I don't think CD does punk justice, and I don't think it ever will fully.

AJ: It really helps with making our stuff more accessible, like I said about bands just playing to their friends, I think you constantly need new people to play your music to so you can see if it's any good or not, there's been songs we've played in front of friends that they've loved, but when we play them in front of indie and metal fans they all think it's terrible, Punk isn't really a niche market, I think it's something that everyone can relate to, you just have to get them to listen to it.

MM: Do you feel the Welsh punk scene is unfairly weighted and influenced by the Cardiff faction?

AJ: I don't really know much about the Cardiff scene, we've only just started playing there, but I imagine it's a lot like the Swansea scene, bands only seem to want to play with their mates and only want to play to their mates, and that's fine by me, I think the best welsh punk bands tend to come from the valleys anyway, like Foreign Legion, the Sick Livers and Panic Basket. The city punk bands tend to stray more towards the pop side of punk or end up playing ska, and I don't think any of us care for that sort of stuff.

Beast: We were the same when we were in CUNT, it was playing with the same bands in the same places to the same people time and time again, and you get the impression that you're really good because you're always packing the place out, then you go and play somewhere else and nobody cares, and it's not because you're shit, it's usually because you've started playing for the audience, not for yourself.

AJ: Yeah so I think getting cliquy like that isn't just harmful to the scene, but it hurts the bands in the clique too. So yeah I think the bands that make it big in the Cardiff scene are generally just Cardiff based bands with a lot of friends as opposed to being the better bands. And for some people that's fine, but the people who really matter will come and find you.

MM: What's next for Struck Out?

AJ: Well we're gonna start working on our next EP at some point in the near future

Beast: And we've got that gig in Porth with Foreign Legion on July 31st, which is probably our most important gig yet.

AJ: and we have a few summer gigs to play, the annual all-dayer in the Duke and then We're in the Uplands Music Festival in Swansea.

Beast: and we gotta get a van

AJ: Yeah, then we can start playing a bit further away, maybe around Christmas/new year we'll try and get a few gigs around England.

MM: How can people get in touch?

AJ: We've got the usual stuff pages on websites myspace.com/struckout-band and we're on Facebook, but the address is a string of numbers and shit, so just search for us.

Beast: There's a few videos on youtube too

MM: Parting comments or cheap shots?

Beast: Don't vote, it only makes them think they're important

AJ: And religion is the problem, not the answer.

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