

NOCTURNE

Magazine

Volume II

Issue 4

Fall 1992



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NOCTURNE MAGAZINE
VOL. II, ISSUE 4
FALL 1992

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EDITORIAL: Ars Politicus Et Musica

I'm sure you've noticed by now that one of the more prevalent trends in the '90's is the melding of political and social concerns with music. Turn on MTV or flip through Rolling Stone and you'll surely find something about the upcoming elections, the rapid disintegration of the fabric of society, racial (and other forms of) discrimination, environmental deterioration or the continuing decline of the economy. Frankly, I'm getting a little sick of all the hype fused in with what's supposed to be entertainment. If I wanted the news, I'll watch CNN or read Time. On the other hand, I realize the value of music as a catalyst for change like other forms of art. Art opens our minds and makes us aware of what's going on outside of our own little lives. It also reaches varied audiences that might not normally be receptive towards certain topics and ideas. I guess getting your facts through an art form is an easier pill to swallow than getting it raw and unprocessed. I've also noticed that, for the most part, music industry participants who have delved into the realm of socio-political themes (whether to champion a specific cause or just to provide a forum for debate) have sincere motives and are dedicated to their particular objectives even as they strive to be *en vogue*. We are the youth, the future of this planet, so let's have our music mixed in with a dose of worldly significance, shall we?

In this light, here are my five selections for this quarter. I've been receiving a lot of interesting new releases of late but we were unfortunately unable to feature all of them. These five bands are the ones we didn't get to do but I believe are worthy of mention because they all represent a different genre within the larger sphere of Hard Rock/Heavy Metal/Alternative Music and have some, shall we say, socially-redeeming value. And read my lips (I mean, read on)... "no Seattle bands!!!" There's too much coverage of the Seattle scene in the media that I feel that there is no need for me to go around endorsing any of them personally. Anyway, first off, in the socio-political vein is HELMET's "Meantime" (INTERSCOPE). This can best be described as thrashy, industrial, alternative, hard core with savage melodies and cynical intelligent lyrics. This New York quartet has been garnering a lot of attention with their first single "Unsung" which I think is the best on the album (CD or whatever). Leaning towards more cultural diversity is TOTAL ECLIPSE's self-titled debut (A&M). This band is a cross between LIVING COLOR and KING'S X with a lively funky flavor. Two years ago, I saw this band showcase at the Whisky. I ran across them again at the Terminator last July and I was delighted to discover that they finally got signed. A little on the glam side, is FASTER PUSSYCAT. Faster Pussycat? Well, don't discount this band heedlessly. Their new album "Whipped" (ELEKTRA) is meaner, darker and more diverse than most of what I've been hearing recently. And I admire them for sticking to their guns by still peddling some good old-fashioned Hollywood sleaze. This band now has the maturity to back up their image and attitude. For some straight-forward melodic rock, listen to VON GROOVE (Chrysalis/EMI). This trio from Canada offers a platter of 13 songs chockful of rich heavy guitar riffs and sensitive acoustic strains. This band also boasts the talents of former Triumph guitarist and songwriter Mladen. Last but not perhaps the best of the lot is the ELECTRIC BOYS' "Groovus Maximus" (ATCO). These guys opened for MR. BIG last August and their scorching set completely blew me away. They're a hybrid of different styles ranging from LED ZEPPELIN, AEROSMITH, '60's psychedelia and the Blues. All tracks are rare gems that have a sparkle all their own. They have everything from the hard-rocking "Bad Motherfucker" to the Beatlesque "Mary in the Mystery World", the angst-laden "Dying to Be Loved", the humorous "Groovus Maximus", the catchy "Bed of Roses" and the socially-conscious "The Sky is Crying". Their image and sound is somewhat "hippie thrash" if you can imagine that.

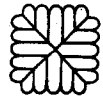
Well, I'll leave you now with your imaginings and hopefully you got something out of my little treatise on politics and music coupled with some album recommendations. As always, our readers' ideas, comments and suggestions are welcome. So don't hesitate to write. Remember... the pen is mightier than the sword!

by Jean Picache





motorhead



by Jean Picache

Motorhead to me (and most people I should think) are veritable rock icons. I am thus honored to be writing this chronicle on them that has actually been two years in the making. I met their singer/bassist Lemmy at the Rainbow on the Sunset Strip two years ago when I tried to discuss serious topics with him but the conversation rapidly deteriorated into ridiculously personal but humorous territories. A year later, I had dinner with drummer Mikkey Dee at a restaurant before his show at the One Step Beyond with Don Dokken. He talked about Sweden (where he's from), his career, life on tour and his philosophy about life. Imagine my surprise when I found out recently that he joined Motorhead! Finally, I was able to schedule a formal interview with guitarist Phil "Zoom" Campbell over the phone with co-guitarist Wurzel distracting him in the background. From all of these encounters, I conclude that these guys currently composing Motorhead are the funniest, most down-to-earth and craziest bunch of guys every put together!

Zoom would probably argue with me on that point though. He was complaining to me about Lemmy having "an ego the size of the Titanic." He also added, "we do all the hard work. Lemmy gets all the praise." There I was, loaded with questions about musical direction, lyrical messages, guitar styles and album cover symbolisms when Zoom quickly took control and just told me whatever was on his mind at the moment. Well, at least I got the following relevant information from him:

* They were in L.A. (where he phoned me from) because they just shot the video for the first single, "Hellraiser", off their new album "March or Die" (WTG/EPIC). "Hellraiser" was penned by Lemmy, Ozzy Osbourne and Zakk Wylde and is for the latest sequel of the "Hellraiser" horror movies. This song is also on the latest Ozzy album.

* Zoom's from Wales and he auditioned and joined Motorhead in 1984 about the same time as Wurzel did. "It's like a family band," he says of Motorhead. He then reveals that his guitar playing is a "cross between Jimi Hendrix and a mosquito". He and Wurzel have "different styles but it works."

* "'1916" (their much-lauded first major label-release) did good but it didn't do as good as it should have (sales-wise)," Zoom bemoans. They even "couldn't go to the Grammy Awards" ("1916" was nominated for Best Hard Rock/Heavy Metal Performance last year). "Only Lemmy did."

* Zoom declares that he is looking forward to their tour with Ozzy (as of press date, they are now touring with Guns N' Roses instead) since he "didn't want to do clubs like we've done in the past."

* "Lemmy wrote "March Or Die" (the song)." It's got a "great set of lyrics but it could have been a better song." All it talks about are "flags and war" when Zoom would rather talk about "golf and cricket." "We don't want to ram it (Lemmy's cynical messages) down people's throats."

* With regards to how GN'R's Slash got involved with their album, Zoom explains that Slash "phoned us up before we started. We've known him since "Orgasmatron". They were nothing then." As for doing a cover version of "Cat Scratch Fever," "we've always wanted to do (the song). (We have the) same manager as Ted Nugent. (It's the) type of song we might have wrote (sic) for ourselves. (It's) much better than the original," he boasts.

I'm a little baffled why a band with Motorhead's stature is opening for Ozzy and Guns N' Roses. The only plausible reason is that their reputation and critical acclaim is far ahead of their commercial success. That is unfortunately a sad fact in today's music business climate. Hopefully, the precedent set by "1916" and their strong follow-up with "March or Die" will catapult them towards that direction as well. "March or Die" features eleven outstanding tracks like "Jack the Ripper" with its killer speed guitar hooks, "I Ain't No Nice Guy" which is an excellent reflective mellow duet with Ozzy and the bluesy "You Better Run" with Slash's guitar prowess on the solo section. The overall sound and feel of the album can only be best described as definitive Motorhead. This band, that has already witnessed three decades, is still as vital as it was when it was conceived in the late '70's. I believe Motorhead will still be force to be reckoned with in the '90's.



Try A Little Respect
by Samantha De Young

So just what is going on with people these days? Some say it's drugs, some say it's rap music, rock and roll, or maybe the media. In weighing all the excuses and trying to come to an unbiased conclusion, I have to honestly say it all comes down to a gross lack of respect. I'm not talking about "will you respect me in the morning?" respect. I'm talking about plain old human kindness and humanitarian respect. You respect me and my stuff, I'll respect you and your stuff (stuff defined: life, feelings, ideas, tangible and non-tangible items).


What is so difficult in realizing and respecting the unspoken boundaries and bonds of humans and human nature? Do you really need to thrash that concert venue or club to prove a point or "get your kicks"? And when you overstep these boundaries of

respect, can you really walk away and be free of any guilt or remorse that you may have actually inflicted pain or destroyed property? If so, you should think of running a congressional office with some of the slime and filth in our communities. You'll sure get my vote... to go to hell!


And as if the act of destruction and lack of respect isn't enough, you also ruin it for the rest of us. Now I'm no Dudley Doright but I sure know when to draw the line. And if these riots and acts of destruction at concerts don't stop soon, we may be given no choice but to watch our favorite bands on videotape only.

This isn't a plea to repent and join the 700 Club. This is a suggestion that maybe next time you feel like letting loose and getting wild-do it, but be aware and respectful of your brothers and your environment. I mean, c'mon, what's it gonna take? Are we going to all have to be sent back to kindergarten or Sunday school? Just remember, it's our world, our community, our right to rock. Let's take steps to ensure they're going to be around for a long, long time.

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4 NON BLONDES



by Michelle Randazzo

"Bigger, Better, Faster, More!", the soon to be released debut album from the local band 4 Non Blondes is a must hear. 4 Non Blondes have a sound that is definitely bigger, better, faster (when appropriate) and more than anything that I've heard in the bay area in a long time. The music is refreshingly original, sampling elements of many different genres, and creating something unique and powerful.

I spoke with the lead singer Linda Perry and asked her if she could classify their music. "It is basically just rock and roll, but rock and roll is something different to everyone. We all will listen to just about anything, from country to jazz to what ever. The style doesn't matter, it just has to be good."

Linda and Christa Hillhouse, the bass player, are the founding members of 4 Non Blondes. Drummer Dawn Richardson was the next addition and guitar player Roger Rocha completes the line-up. Roger didn't connect with the band until after the recording of the album. Louis Metoyer played on the album after problems arose with the original guitarist during the recording session.


Linda is very enthusiastic about the current line-up. "I really feel like we're a band now. Our chemistry together is really special." It is this chemistry that separates 4 Non Blondes from other bands in the bay area. "When we get together, something really clicks. In so many other bands there is a lot of conflict that we just don't have."

Something else that sets 4 Non Blondes apart is the women. I asked Linda if she though the female factor had helped or hampered them along the way. "I don't think it has helped or hampered us. Sometimes there is the guy who has to test the limits. We just make those boundaries really obvious and make it clear that it's (our femininity) not an issue."

When you go to see 4 Non Blondes live you will definitely be entertained. Their diversity and versatility creates a natural flow from one song to the next, with each song following in a natural progression. You can check out 4 Non Blondes at the Castro Street Fair on October 4. Do yourself a favor-go check them out.

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LIVE WIRE

W.A.S.P.

by Jean Picache

A rare phenomena occurred about two months ago when I saw two exceptional shows within the same week. First, W.A.S.P. unleashed a veritable sonic onslaught at the STONE last August 2nd. Blackie Lawless presented an almost totally different lineup with newcomers Doug Blair on lead guitar and Stet Howland on drums. The only old member was Johnny Rod on bass. But then I never followed W.A.S.P. or Blackie's controversial career so I really can't draw any comparisons. All I can attest to is that the performance I witnessed was by an instrumentally-tight band that will soon be making waves all over the world. Blackie was in fine form vocally as he bounced around on stage, Johnny was like a wildman let loose, while Doug lent the band some solidity with his soulful playing. Some of the new songs from their upcoming album *CRIMSON IDOL* lagged a little though. I think this is partially due to the songs heavier lyrical and melodic content. But now we witness Blackie without his garish persona and W.A.S.P. heading into more socially and politically-aware themes. Hopefully, W.A.S.P. will continue to "corrupt" the youth in the future. Also, their songs were so catchy I was singing along like I knew the lyrics all my life! The song I liked the most was *Wild Child* which was strangely *a propòs* for me at that point in time. They stormed to the conclusion of their set with their most popular tunes *Blind in Texas* and *I Wanna Be Somebody*. So what was the second show? Well, it was W.A.S.P. again at the ONE STEP BEYOND on August 4th! Somehow, once was not enough so I was drawn to see them again two

days later. Surprisingly, I listened and watched even more intently the second time around! Blackie and the gang took advantage of the larger and more professional-looking stage setup. It will be a while before they launch their official U.S. tour and be back in the Bay Area but their new album is due out soon and that's something to look forward to. They are currently in Europe where *CRIMSON IDOL* has already been released and generating overwhelming interest. So be prepared for the next W.A.S.P. attack in our neck of the woods!!!

Buck Naked and the Bare Bottom Boys

by Louie Senorelli

Ladies and gentlemen, Buck Naked and the Bare Bottom Boys are back in town and they are hot! Brian Setzer and crew have nothing on Buck, except maybe clothes. This trio of raw lust plays a mean style of music. I think porno-billy is what Buck called it in his appearance on the Joan Rivers show about a year ago. The lyrics aren't for your first grader though. In fact, it's been rumored that Tipper Gore and the PMRC have Buck Naked dart boards back at the home office. Though the band may take some heat for their lyrical content, the boys never delete crowd favorites such as "As Long As I Have A Face", "You Have a Place to Sit" or "Bend Over Baby and Let Me Drive" from their set.

The trio consists of two guitars, Buck playing the bass lines on one of the two six-string twangers, and a drummer, Buck's younger brother. More than once throughout the band's one hour set, Buck's vocals reminded me of Roy Orbison or Elvis, and I mean that in the most complimentary way. This band has found a way to bring

old time rock-n-roll to a modern day audience and they loved it. Buck seems to spark the same kind of crowd reaction as the Fabulous Bud E. Luv. Almost everyone enjoys something about the show, even if they can't put their finger on what it is. This is the kind of act that makes San Francisco such a great place to experience live local entertainment. These guys could probably open for Metallica and get away with it.

While I wrote this article, I was continuously reminded of the anti-rock-n-roll nuts of the 40's and 60's calling Elvis' pelvic movements corruptive and evil and wondered what they would say about Buck's G-String Plunger. Keep your eyes peeled for these guys, they're worth seeing.

Napalm Death

by Michele Bohannon

Marching their way down the path for the Campaign For Musical Destruction comes Napalm Death. If you've never seen or heard of ND, you are missing out. Now I know this isn't the type of music you put on when you're about to clean house or relax but these guys got it going on. But I will be the first to admit this music isn't for everybody. It takes a select few to appreciate it. ND puts on one of the best live Death Metal shows I've ever seen. They played an hour and a half set that left all in their presence crushed by their energy. As bodies rolled around on top of heads and moshers and stage divers took flight. The band kept all onlookers in a musical mental trance. There's something about this band live that does it for me and if you're into this heavy fast death metal thing, this is the band that leads the rest of the pack of the young Death Metal generation.

Forbidden

by Jean Picache

Forbidden has been experiencing a lot of major upheavals of late. With the departure of drummer Paul Bostaph (now with Slayer) and the parting of ways with their label Relativity, we felt it was time to apprise ourselves and our readers about the latest happenings surrounding one of the Bay Area's premier thrash bands. A quick call to guitarist Craig Lucero accomplished this.

Relativity Relations:

We had two albums out on Relativity Records. The latter of the two being "Twisted into Form" (the first was "Forbidden Evil") was one that actually did quite well for us except for the fact that we wanted to tour another year and we had sort of a falling out with them (the record company) because they wanted us to go into the studio and that wasn't what we were into because we don't have the music suffer for anybody's dollars and cents. We worked it out, so we actually got off our label, which was hassle to do but we did get off scott free. Ever since then we have had the rare opportunity of growing as a band and getting to know each other much better. A lot of this happened the past couple of years to us and I wouldn't change a thing. It's been a huge learning experience.

Musical Drummer Chairs:

Steve Jacobs is the new drummer. He's not from around here and that's one of the reasons we're lucky because a lot of the drummers around here tend to limit themselves. He's from Cincinnati and went to the music conservatory up there. He's quite an amazing drummer. (As for their former drummer) Paul would be the first one to say that he wasn't playing solidly in our band. He was a great drummer who wasn't playing solidly because he didn't take the time to rehearse and study his material. The enthusiasm is the main part of Steve's attributes. It (their parting with Paul) wasn't too bad. Where he is he gets what he wanted and that I guess was financial security. Where we were we wanted to get more on the artistic side and he wasn't getting into that anymore. (The rest of the band is

still intact with Tim Calvert on guitar, Russ Anderson on vocals and Matt Camacho on bass).

Dream Theme:

We are done writing new songs and right now we are going over a few things lyrically because we have a theme for this album that we are sticking to. I'm not going to go into the theme of this album because it's something you have to read and figure out for yourself. We put two years of deep thought into this album and I am not about to summarize it before it even comes out. It wouldn't make sense to anybody if I explained it right now anyway.

Recording and Label Hunting:

We are going to record soon but it's only going to be for ourselves. We've been in negotiations with labels including contracts being sent back and forth. We are still in the label searching mode but what we are doing is recording every tune we've got and we are only going to let a few select labels who are really into what we are doing hear it.

Live Vibes:

I'd like to play live but not in the Bay Area until the album is out. I think it's getting to that point where we over-stayed our welcome as far as clubs go. We are not going to fade away. We're not going to burn out. It's just that we are still metamorphosizing and we need to put out this album. We need to get it out of our systems.

What San Francisco Thrash Scene?

That was immediately the epitaph on the gravestone as soon as they put a "Thrash Scene" on it. I think when people build up the hype like that there's bound to be quite a big fall as well as the big splash. It was all new and energetic but once that sound wore out, there wasn't much there for most of these (Thrash) bands. So they're banging their heads against the wall still trying to beat out the same riffs they've been doing all these years wondering why no one's listening to them anymore.

Not a very comforting thought but trends do come and go and there might not be a Thrash Scene anymore but there is still Forbidden. Craig doesn't really consider themselves Thrash anymore but more of a "Metal band that's grown up" and with their talent and dedication, expect to see a revival or a totally new movement in the Bay Area real soon.

