

# The Final Cut

## *Plotting world domination from Altoona*

Otherwise, CD/Tape/Culture analysis and commentary with D'Scribe, D'Drummer, Da Boy, D'Ump, Da Common Man, D' Big Man, AI, D'Pebble, Da Beer God and other assorted riff raff...

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### D'RATING SYSTEM:

9.1-10.0 Excellent - BUY OR DIE!	4.1-5.0 Incompetent - badly flawed
8.1-9.0 Very good - worth checking out	3.1-4.0 Bad - mostly worthless
7.1-8.0 Good but nothing special	2.1-3.0 Terrible - worthless
6.1-7.0 Competent but flawed	1.1-2.0 Horrible - beyond worthless
5.1-6.0 Barely competent	0.1-1.0 Bottom of the cesspool abomination!

**PROVING THAT RUMORS OF THIS 'ZINE'S DEMISE ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED**, here FINALLY is a new edition of the Cut. I won't waste a whole lot of time and space analyzing why we haven't put out a new issue in so long. I'll just say that I've been one EXTREMELY busy person this past year, and wasn't able to sink the time into the Cut that I wanted to. In fact, I'm just NOW starting to get caught up writing about all the stuff that happened last summer – concerts, vacations, album reviews, etc. And I still have more to do! So next issue, our “end of year recap” issue, will also feature some reviews from last summer, and other takes and B-S I need to get out of my system. If you're reading this issue online on Rockpage, make sure to catch the print issue when it comes out, as there will be several reviews and photos not in this online issue!

You'd think with all the time that has elapsed since our last issue – the Millenium Issue (geez!) – that I'd have a lot of accumulated takes to share with you. Not necessarily the case. Since the Elian thing was resolved, baseball season and the Sydney Olympics are over, the only things I have left to expound upon are...the presidential election and football.

What else can be said about the presidential election except...what a mess! I know had I had enough monetary resources to communicate with the people my agenda of “a plate of wings and a six-pack of Genesee for every American family,” I would have won by a landslide and this whole recount/revote mess could have been avoided. But now that “W” has won the White House, how effective will he really be? Will the

nation unite behind the new President, or will the partisan bickering across the aisles in the Senate and House of Representatives effectively make "W" a lame duck for the next four years? Obviously "W" didn't receive a clear-cut mandate from the American people or the Electoral College to govern, so for anything to be accomplished during the next four years, both Republicans and Democrats are going to need to learn the meaning of the word "compromise." It should be an interesting four years.

For the record, I was in favor of a recount in Florida. Not recount after recount after recount, but just one organized, STANDARDIZED recount across the state to get a definitive final count on that state's votes. In any case, you can bet that Florida – and many other states – will be doing some deep soul-searching regarding their voting system and the way votes are counted.

Turning to football, I won't lament Penn State's lousy season this year; I was expecting it. The Lions losing all their senior leadership, combined with the Rashard Casey alleged cop-beating fiasco and a brutal schedule all gave early signs that this wasn't going to be a great year. I willingly surrendered the MGD 30-pack and Zima Citrus case to D'Drummer and D'Pebble respectively after the expected Michigan 33-11 drubbing of Penn State (hell, I predicted Michigan 51-10 on the air!) Call me stupid, but yes, D'Drummer, the bet is on for next year too. JoePa has got to turn this thing around against Michigan SOMETIME. Next season ought to be very interesting, as the Lions open at home against Miami, get nearly two weeks off before traveling to Virginia, and then host Wisconsin. I don't think they'll contend for BCS next year either, but hopefully some of the redshirted underclassmen and younger players will step forth and make some good things happen. We'll see.

And then there was that whole Rashard Casey mess, and the controversy over whether he should have been suspended from the university and football team pending the outcome of the grand jury investigation. Ultimately I agreed with JoePa on this one – the guy was innocent until proven guilty, and as it turned out, the grand jury didn't have enough evidence to indict Casey. And it was sweet justice seeing Neil Rude-as-Hell in the Mirror have to eat the proverbial crow and apologize for jumping the gun on Casey's indictment.

One more thought about college football in general...If you look at the big picture, there seems to be a changing of the guard of sorts regarding college football and its top echelon of teams. Sure the Florida States and Nebraskas and Michigans are still dominant, but look at some of the teams that made it to the postseason and some who didn't. Obviously, Penn State didn't get there this year (hopefully that is just a temporary anomaly); but also not getting there were storied powerhouses Alabama, USC, Syracuse and BYU – teams that usually always make it to a bowl game. On the other hand, look at the former doormat teams that made it to bowl games this year – Northwestern, TCU, Kansas State, Oregon State and Iowa State – and the latter three all won convincingly over their opponents! Considering the revolving door that is the majority of the college football coaching game any more, I wouldn't be surprised to soon see Duke, Wake Forest, Vanderbilt, Temple and Rutgers all emerge as national powerhouses. Just a thought.

I'm a little happier regarding the Steelers. They missed the playoffs, but 9-7 is an improvement over last year, and had the NFL officials not blown three separate calls during the season (which the NFL later apologized for), the Steelers might have finished 11-5 and made it to the postseason. It seems Kordell finally got his act

together in the homestretch, and the season ended with the hope that the Black and Gold might be able to carry some momentum into next season. We'll wait and see.

Steve Irwin – a.k.a. “The Crocodile Hunter” – this man is baked in the brain! What a nut! If she hasn't already done it, his wife should take out a good insurance policy, because this guy is not going to live to see 50. My money's on one of those spitting cobras or exotic spiders laying down the bite on the Crocodile Hunter and getting scoreboard! The dude is just too reckless for it not to eventually happen!

*D'Scribe*

On with d'reviews...



D'Scribe, celebrating ten years of Pellegrine's wing addiction.

## A TRIBUTE TO TRIBUTES...

**(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – NATIVITY IN BLACK II: A TRIBUTE TO BLACK SABBATH (Priority)** When Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath first started defining this musical form called heavy metal (dubbed 'downer' rock by their critics) in the early 70's, they struck a chord with a world of detached youths growing up in an era of distrust – Vietnam and Kent State, lying politicians and Cold War – issues for which the popular 'flower power' music of the time had no answers, and angry, dark music provided a release. Little did anyone realize it at that time, but Ozzy and company were onto something, and they revolutionized a genre of music, with their influence enduring and thriving into the present day. The popularity of Ozzy's annual OzzFest get-together signifies the widespread cross-generational appeal of Sabbath and the musical form they pioneered. The second installment of Nativity In Black features a number of recent OzzFest alumni, paying homage and demonstrating the influence Ozzy and Black Sabbath had on them. The beauty of Nativity In Black II is

twofold: First, every performer here plays for keeps and sinks heart and soul into their interpretations of Sabbath; and you can tell they mean every last note of respect they show to Ozzy and Sabbath for their influence. Secondly, every performer interprets Ozzy and Sabbath in their own individual voices – we don't hear verbatim note-for-note Xerox copies of Sabbath tunes here, but each band defining Black Sabbath in their own style. Some groups here tackle Sabbath with a straight-ahead approach, such as Godsmack's brash version of "Sweet Leaf," which opens the album; Megadeth's suitably driving version of "Never Say Die;" Pantera's brooding treatment of "Electric Funeral;" Slayer's despondent interpretation of "Hand of Doom," and Soulfly's forceful take on "Under The Sun." Other groups apply stylistic variations to their Sabbath remakes – such as Machine Head and Static X going cyber on "Hole In The Sky" and "Behind the Wall of Sleep" respectively; System of a Down's fast and funky version of "Snowblind;" Hed(Pe)'s soul-meets-rage rendering of "Sababra Cadabra;" and Busta Rhymes' unique gangsta adaptation of "Iron Man (This Means War)," which turns the Sabbath classic into a rallying cry for solidarity among his brethren. Ozzy Osbourne himself gets in on the act twice; on the aforementioned Busta Rhymes "Iron Man;" and teaming with Primus for an excellent update of "N.I.B." My personal favorite remake here, though, belongs to Monster Magnet – who escalates "Into The Void" into a psychedelic, bad-acid-trip-induced social statement on the horrors of Vietnam; the reverb effects and singer Dave Wyndorf's psychotic ramblings are worth the price of admission alone! Bottom line – Nativity In Black II ranks among the best tribute albums I have ever heard, because it ties old- and new-school heavy rock together, and clearly illustrates how Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath have touched today's diversified generation of heavy metal-gearred musicians. This album sheds new light on the music of Black Sabbath by allowing each performer to translate Sabbath's influence into their own musical voices. Well worth the investment – unquestionably BUY OR DIE!!!! RATING 9.7/10.0

**(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – A TRIBUTE TO JUDAS PRIEST: DELIVERING THE GOODS VOL. II (Century Media)**

Judas Priest branded me as a fan forever back in 1981, when they headlined one of the best concerts I have ever seen at the Cambria County War Memorial in Johnstown during their Point of Entry tour (a concert which also featured the Paul DiAnno-fronted Iron Maiden and David Coverdale's fledgling Whitesnake). Over the years, many practitioners of heavy metal music have been touched by the influence of Priest. A Tribute to Judas Priest Vol. I came out in 1997 and delivered above and beyond expectations, enough so that Century Media Records decided to assemble a Volume II. And though I thought it nearly impossible that another set of Priest remakes could outdo Volume I, damned if Volume II doesn't do it!!! We get another baker's dozen tracks of Judas Priest interpretations, and not a clunker in the bunch! And though the Priest remakes by such established headbanging names like Gamma Ray ("Exciter" and "Victim of Changes"), U.D.O. ("Metal Gods") and Saxon ("You've Got Another Thing Comin'") are impressive and reason enough to celebrate this album, it's the unknown quantity – several newer and less established bands – who steal the show here. Enter German power metalists Blind Guardian and their powerful remake of "Beyond The Realms of Death;" Iron Savior's treatment of "Desert Plains" and Radakka's torrid version of "Night Crawler," all which stick close to the original Priest models while giving their own signatures to each. Several forgotten bands awaken to contribute Priest interpretations as well, such as New York's Virgin Steele with "Screaming For Vengeance," Germany's Rage with "Jawbreaker" and Forbidden's "Dissident Aggressor." Strapping Young Lad frontman Devin Townsend, who opened eyes on Volume I with "Exciter," gives another remarkable display with his treatment of "Sinner;" and Brazilian art-

metalists Angra blister off a version of "Painkiller." These bands and artists all sound savage and hungry here – listen to how Radakka's drummer pounds the living hell out of his drumkit in the closing moments of "Night Crawler" – it gives me goosebumps! A Tribute to Judas Priest: Delivering the Goods Vol. II, while celebrating the beast that is Priest, also serves to expose some lesser-known metal talent on the rise. If you're a fan of Judas Priest, this tribute is another must-have. BUY OR DIE!!! RATING 9.6/10.0

**(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – AWAKEN THE DEMON – TRIBUTE TO DIO (Dwell)** No, this is not a musical salute to the guy who ran new Sebastiano's (sorry Claudio), but rather a recently-released tribute album to Ronnie James Dio. With a career encompassing stints with Elf, Rainbow, Black Sabbath and his own storied solo venture, Ronnie Dio has influenced his fair share of aspiring metalheads over the years, and a dozen unsigned bands pay homage to Dio over 13 tracks (Washington D.C.'s Division contributes two tracks, fast-paced versions of "Rainbow in the Dark" and "Heaven and Hell"). But while on paper a Dio tribute album seems like a good idea, on plastic this album has its drawbacks. First, the sound and production quality varies from band to band here, making for an inconsistent mix overall. Secondly, while the Black Sabbath and Judas Priest tributes above featured bands and artists giving inspired tributes to both bands using their own musical voices, the majority of artists on Awaken the Demon seem more concerned with emulating Dio's voice than interpreting the music in their own voices. Only Aurora Borealis's death-metal take on "We Rock" avoids trying to sound like Dio verbatim. Almost every other track here features a singer trying to clone Ronnie James Dio. While this means we get to hear a lot of capable frontmen, it also means we get an album full of Dio imitations, not an album of inspired tributes to Dio. Still, there are good moments here – both Division remakes, Steel Prophet's version of "Neon Nights" with its tight vocal harmonies, and Pittsburgh/Wheeling's Psycho Scream and Dofka contributions of "Last In Line" and "Egypt" respectively (though both are almost the same band these days). Ultimately, I give this album a thumbs up because even as imitators, most of these bands are fairly close to the mark in their emulations of Ronnie James Dio, but I leave Awaken The Demon wishing these acts would have invested more of their own musical personalities into these Dio remakes. RATING 7.4/10.0

**SAMMY HAGAR – TEN 13 (Cabo Wabo/Beyond)** A lot has been said and written since Sammy Hagar and Van Halen heatedly parted ways a few years back. A quick check of the scoreboard since the split shows Hagar has been the clear winner thus far, with three albums, a smash hit party anthem with last year's "Mas Tequila," two successful concert tours, his own Cabo Wabo cantina, record label and brand-name tequila. Upon listening to Sammy's third album since the Van Halen split, Ten 13, you get the sense that the Red Rocker is not at all looking back at his Van Halen past. On the contrary, Sammy celebrates his own post- Van Halen renewal here, on an album that picks up where last year's Red Voodoo album and "Mas Tequila" left off. After the album's opening track – the rowdy rocker "Shaka Doobie (The Limit)" – recounts the not-so-pleasant 'morning after' "Mas Tequila," Ten 13's prevailing theme of celebration takes over. The uptempo "Let Sally Drive" is a glorious ode to fast cars and women. A bit later on the disc, the title track "Ten 13" – Sammy's birthday – invites everyone to partake in the celebration of renewal and rebirth. "The Real Deal," featuring guest Roy Rogers on slide guitar, is Sammy's proud and honest statement of purpose. And the album closer "Tropic of Capricorn" celebrates Sammy's tropical paradise and the euphoric state of mind it inspires. But Sammy isn't all party-hardy here – the album's first single, "Serious Juju," is his environmental statement about modern society's encroachment on Mother Earth,

while "Protection" is his commentary about too much government control over our lives. Sammy explores spirituality on "The Message" and "Deeper Kinda Love," and throws power-ballad lovers a bone with the tear-jerky "Little Bit More." Sammy's vocal wail and bravado are in excellent form throughout the album, and his backing corps of Waboritas – guitarist Vic Johnson, bassist Mona, keyboard player Jesse Harms and drummer David Lauser – have solidified into a tight, cohesive and supportive unit behind him. Bottom line here – Sammy Hagar didn't let the proverbial door hit him in the behind when he exited camp Van Halen, and Ten 13 is Sammy at his loudest and proudest, his finest hour since the split. This is an album that will have Red Rocker fans celebrating jubilantly, and 'Van Hagar' haters cursing under their breath. RATING 9.6/10.0

**ALICE COOPER – BRUTAL PLANET (Spitfire Records)** Long before Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie became synonymous with shock-rock, there was the original shock-rock, Alice Cooper, who rose to fame and fortune with his use of horror-movie imagery, theatrics, and songs about the macabre. On his new album, Brutal Planet, Alice doesn't need guest cameo appearances from Vincent Price or odes to romance with cadavers; he finds that the reality of today's world is scary enough. Set against a terse, modern metal-styled musical backdrop, Brutal Planet is Alice's exaggerated expose about the troubled world we live in, where news headlines, violence, corruption and hatred are more frightening than anything Hollywood can dish up. Nearly every song explores a different aspect of today's world headed to Hell; the lead-off title song is Alice's observation about how original sin in the Garden of Eden started us on our path through wars and the Holocaust to today's 'brutal planet' filled with violence, hatred and greed. "Sanctuary" depicts today's 'zombies,' stressed-out 9-to-5'ers who live the robotic cycle of punching the time clock, sleeping, and doing it all over again the next day. "Wicked Young Man" explores the violent young mind that glorifies Naziism and shoots up schools. "Gimme" examines how self-centeredness and greed lead people to sell their souls and sell out their values. Besides including witty chorus references to past Alice hits like "Welcome To My Nightmare" and "No More Mr. Nice Guy," "It's The Little Things" explores the on-edge 'go postal' and 'road rage' mentality. "Eat Some More" is Alice's sad commentary about society's gluttony and wastefulness. And - 25 years after his 1975 hit ode to domestic violence, "Only Women Bleed" - Alice delivers the follow-up, "Take It Like A Woman" (Alice performs the two songs together on his current concert tour). With longtime collaborator/producer Bob Ezrin back in the fold, and a backing band including former Kiss drummer Eric Singer, Alice Cooper embraces today's modern metal sound on Brutal Planet, tipping his top hat to Rob Zombie and Korn (fair enough, considering Zombie owes some inspiration for his visual presentation to Cooper to begin with). Ultimately, Alice is still Alice, and his witty observations about today's troubled world and his renewed sense of nastiness makes Brutal Planet an album that should awaken longtime Alice Cooper fans from the dead, and win new fans from today's Ozzfest generation as well. RATING 9.4/10.0

**RADIOHEAD – KID A (Capitol)** Radiohead has become a unique entity in the world of rock. They are a band that first came to light with a major hit single several years ago – "Creep" – and have since managed to escape being typecast and defined by that hit single. On their subsequent albums, The Bends and OK Computer, Radiohead has stretched the parameters of their sound, entering the realms of Pink Floyd-like prog-rock, post-punk angst and even electronica, to the cheers of numerous critics as well as fans looking for a new savior to lead rock into the future. On Kid A, Radiohead stretches their frontier even further. In layman's terms, this album is way out there. Don't search for "Creep Pt. 2" here, you won't find it. What you will find is

a nearly seamless, almost ambient, electronic landscape, upon which Radiohead brainchild Thom Yorke indulges his artistic musical whims. We hear layers of sound, processed voices and weird vocal effects, offsetting organic inclusions like piano and a horn section, all dispersed atop oceanic electronic arrangements that rise and fall like the tide. We hear minimal melodies immersed in eccentric musical experiments. At least in the early going, Radiohead sounds like they may be onto something, as the album's plot develops through the opener "Everything In Its Right Place" and the title track "Kid A." The album's hardest rocking track, "The National Anthem," builds its head of steam towards a chaotic horn-filled climax suggesting both King Crimson and acid jazz tendencies. But then the quiescent, acoustic-leaning "How To Disappear Completely" takes us off on a different tangent altogether, hinting at Joshua Tree-era U2 had Bono been in a more depressed mood. As the album progresses into its more instrumental and interlude-dominated latter stages, though, the novice listener will be hard-pressed to hang on and endure the musical tedium to try to discern what is going on here. Listening to Kid A is like staring at an abstract painting; you'll get out of this album what you put into it. This album requires several listens to obtain any sort of grasp on what is going on, and there's no guarantee that after two, five, or even ten listens that you'll be any closer to comprehending Kid A than you were after the first listen. Kid A is easily Radiohead's most ambitious undertaking, an album that forces the listener to invest serious effort in trying to unveil its mysteries and meaning. For me, this album is way out there, and a bit too eccentric for its own good. The critics and rock elitists may buy Radiohead as the next Pink Floyd; I remain unconvinced. RATING 6.3/10.0

**ANGEL DUST – ENLIGHTEN THE DARKNESS (Century Media)** Fans of quality power metal take note – some of the best metal coming out these days is originating in Europe! Century Media Records has been discovering and exposing some of Europe's finest on this side of the Atlantic, and among their finds is Germany's Angel Dust. Founding bassist Frank Banx and drummer Dirk Assmuth first assembled Angel Dust as a thrash band in the 1980's; after numerous line-up changes and an eight-year hiatus, this band has returned strong with three albums in three years. Enlighten the Darkness, their latest, is an ear-opener. The current Angel Dust line-up of Frank, Dirk, keyboard player Steven Banx, guitarist Bernd Aufermann and singer Dirk Thurisch have crafted a near masterpiece here, blending uncompromising thunder and riffage with intelligent songcraft and detail! Double-kick hammering drum rhythms, caustic guitar chords and sinister keyboard riffs combine to craft savage walls of sound one moment, before going off on a shadowy mellow keyboard interlude the next. Angel Dust effectively layers their sound between Bernd Aufermann's guitar chord crunch and Steven Banx's keyboard finesse, constantly varying the attack with devastating results. Dirk Thurisch sings with power, range and passion, recalling peak-period Rob Halford and Klaus Meine throughout the disc, and the rest of the group backs him with stunning two- and three-part harmonies. There's not a weak song here – from the torrid opening barrage "Let Me Live," the guitar/synth crash and burn of "The One You Are," and the anthemic "Enjoy!" to open the album; to the lengthier and more complex "Fly Away;" to the angrier and more defiant tones of "Come Into Resistance" and "Cross of Hatred." The group is also stunning on several slower numbers: the tender song of despair "Beneath the Silence," the somber power ballad "Still I'm Bleeding," and the closing ballad of enlightenment "Oceans of Tomorrow." Lyrically, though Dirk Thorisch's broken English is challenging to decipher at times, Angel Dust's words seem to explore the fine lines between love and hatred, good and evil. "Enjoy!" appears to be a message from God to enjoy our time on this rock called Earth, rather than waste it on hatred and hurting one another. "Cross of Hatred" likewise warns us to change our hateful

path or deal with the Maker in the end. Through it all, this band sells it with passion and emotion, making every riff, word and ounce of sweat count here. Angel Dust's *Enlighten the Darkness* will restore your faith in modern-day metaldom; it's quality crunch well worth the price of admission...BUY OR DIE!!! RATING 9.6/10.0

**NOCTURNAL RITES – AFTERLIFE (Century Media)** Offering still more hope for the future of old-school- styled metaldom is Sweden's Nocturnal Rites, with their impressive new disc, *Afterlife*. Six members strong, Nocturnal Rites delivers fast and powerful heavy metal with a nod to Maiden, Helloween, Yngwie Malmsteen's earlier work and Thundersteel-era Riot. Drummer Owe Lingvall with his monstrous double-kick bass drums and bassist Nils Eriksson lay down fast and thundering rhythms; Nils Norberg and Fredrik Mannberg do the guitar damage here; Mattias Bernhardsson tempers the sound with a variety of keyboard fills; and singer Jonny Lindkvist is a full-throttled howler with power, range and grit. All together, it makes for a lethal display as Nocturnal Rites barrels through ten high-velocity assaults that blend power, musicianship and melody. But while the musical approach updates old-school-styled power metal, Nocturnal Rites – despite their monicker – doesn't sing of demons, swords and sorcery, but lyrically takes on life's day-to-day struggles and coming to grips with oneself with introspective and intelligent words. Standout tracks include the opening title track "Afterlife," "Wake Up Dead" with its memorable chorus, "The Sinners Cross," "Hell and Back," the slower rumble of "The Sign" and "Temple of the Dead." And in a more progressive vein, Nocturnal Rites takes their sound forward with the futuristic-leaning "Genetic Distortion Sequence" and the album closer "Hellenium." If there is a weakness here, it's that *Afterlife* gives us too much of a good thing here, and the onslaught of high-velocity rhythms gets a little redundant in the album's latter stages. But tunewise, each song stands strong on its own, and in all, Nocturnal Rites gives us a definite keeper in *Afterlife*. If you like your metal fast and powerful, this is quality headbang for the buck – BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.2/10.0

**ALL – PROBLEMATIC (Epitaph)** Starting out as The Descendents in the early 80's, Southern California's All was blending high-velocity punk rock with pop songcraft and fun lyrics long before it became trendy to do so in the 90's. The group's latest album, *Problematic*, proves that these guys still have the edge. With 18 tracks clocking in at 34 minutes, All packs it all into those 34 minutes, in a over-caffeinated punk/pop joyride that will keep you going back for more. Singer Chad Price, guitarist Stephen Egerton, bassist Karl Alvarez and drummer Bill Stevenson play each tune fast and get to the point quickly; this is musical meat with no fat. And the songs are great! All gives us clever observations about ourselves and society on tracks like "Better Than That" (about recognizing truth and the important things in life), the angry "ROIR" (slamming rich kids who flaunt their wealth), "What Are You For" (turning the table on cynics and their negativity), "Real People" and "Drive Away" (about escaping the troubles of daily life). On a more serious note, All gives us some intelligent commentary on "Lock 'Em Away" (regarding society's quick fix for the sick and poor), "Crucifixion" (about religious hypocrisy), "The Skin" (concerning the simplest forms of prejudice), and the anti-suicidal "Nothin' To Live For." All reminisces past romances and what went wrong on "WWW.Sara," "Alive," "Teresa" and "Never Took." Then there's the romance that REALLY went wrong on the agitated "She Broke My Dick," and the midlife paranoia of "I Want Out," summed up with the line "I'm not supposed to end up like Ward Cleaver." All plays it fast and plays it tight, and the tunes all connect – what more could you possibly want? No problem – *Problematic* is a rocking, clever and fun listen, perfect to go along with your two cups of dark roast java in the morning. BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.1/10.0

**TIM RUSS – TIM RUSS (Crescendo)** What wrath has William Shatner wrought upon the entertainment world? With Shatner's breakthrough "singing" successes (?) on those Priceline.com commercials, other Star Trek actors are apparently now inspired to come out of the woodwork to display their musical talents. Enter Tim Russ. For those of you not versed in Trek, Russ plays the Vulcan character Tuvok on Star Trek: Voyager (translation: he has pointy ears just like Mr. Spock). On this self-titled disc, Tim Russ exposes his musical talents for the world to hear. To be fair, this isn't bad. Russ has a solid midrange voice and a little bit of soulfulness going for him, and he applies that voice to a range of sounds from midtempo pop to hard funk to bluesy R&B and even folk. Tuvok...err...Tim writes three of the album's eleven tunes: the Hootie- like midtempo opener "I Can't Imagine," the funky "Crazy" and the jazzy "Strangers." On the rest of the disc, Russ interprets the works of others, from a country-ish version of "Crossroads" to a folksy working of Cat Stevens' "Where Do the Children Play" to Randy Newman's piano ballad "Louisiana" to the upbeat funky treatment of Stephen Stills' hit "Love The One You're With," which closes the album. Tim has a solid band behind him, and lead guitarist Neil Norman's production gives the album a crisp, balanced sound. But Tim Russ shouldn't worry about making space on his mantle for any Grammy awards just yet – while a solid effort, nothing on this album cries out radio/MTV/VH1 smash hit. Considering past Star Trek cast members' musical output, though, give Tim Russ credit for not embarrassing himself on this disc. This is a respectable effort, and certainly far more listenable than any of William Shatner's Priceline.com commercials. RATING 7.8/10.0

**STERLING KOCH – ACOUSTIC CHRISTMAS (Full Force Music)** While every holiday season features its fair share of new superstar holiday albums, there are increasingly more local and regional holiday releases every year as well. A new entry this holiday season is guitarist Sterling Koch's Christmas album, Acoustic Christmas. Born in England but raised in eastern PA, Koch (pronounced "cook") first achieved international acclaim in the 1980's as a Jimi Hendrix protégé via his band at the time, the Sterling Cooke Force, opening for acts like Warrant, Cinderella, REO Speedwagon and others. After two albums with the band, Sterling embarked on a solo career, releasing three successful instrumental albums and receiving attention in several prominent guitar publications. Sterling's direction is acoustic these days, and Acoustic Christmas finds him interpreting holiday classics in a variety of styles. While the majority of the album is instrumental and done in baroque and olde English styles, Sterling does offer some variations, including a soulful treatment of Kathy Mattea's "Somebody Talkin' About Jesus," sung by Joanne and Mike Forbes; also a Latin jazz/samba-flavored version of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." Other highlights include two Koch original compositions, "Lullaby For a Savior" and the album-opening "Luke's Story" (featuring narration by Koch's daughter, Caitlin), plus "Away In A Manger/Silent Night" (with vocals by Koch's other daughter, Lindsay, and Anna Kleckner) and Sterling's fluid guitarwork on "Joy To The World." Sterling Koch gives all these holiday songs a tender and understated touch; while Koch is a superbly talented guitarist, he puts the spirit and mood of each song first and foremost, ahead of any outward displays of his fretboard skills. The result is a tranquil, relaxing listen, and a warm holiday set perfect for sipping hot chocolate in front of the Christmas tree to. (For information on obtaining, visit the web site [www.sterlingkoch.com](http://www.sterlingkoch.com).) RATING 9.1/10.0

**EMILY'S TOYBOX – KINDLY REMOVE THE STICK (self-produced)** On Emily's ToyBox's second full-length CD, Kindly Remove The Stick, the trio succeeds in fusing competent punk-flavored modern rock of the Offspring/Blink 182 variety with their trademark zaniness and sense of humor. Song highlights include the witty wordplay

of the opening track "Dear;" the cocky and boastful "I'm The Bomb;" both the original and radio-friendly versions of "Dick;" the goodbye-and-good-riddance send-off anthem "Buh Bye;" the Jerry Springer-inspired "Celebrity," the delinquent children's book-styled lyrics of "P.M.S.," and the early 60's Four Seasons-flavored "Redneck Girl." Besides further defining Emily's ToyBox's fusion of modern rock stylings with tongue-in-cheek lyricism, Kindly Remove The Stick also further defines the trio's trademark sound. Mike Wise sings his words with an ever-present Jim Carrey-like comic smirk suggesting we never take this guy too seriously. While instrumentally tight, this band plays these songs their way, tossing out the rulebook and never letting things become too predictable. Produced by the band (and mastered at Sony Music Studios in New York), this album exhibits a loose, carefree vibe throughout which suggests that the recording session must have been a blast. In a present-day rock climate filled with rage, anger and cynicism, Emily's ToyBox's humorous edge on Kindly Remove The Stick offers a refreshing slant. This CD is a musical Pandora's box sure to put a naughty smile on the faces of in-the-know Emily's ToyBox fans and the uninitiated alike. (This album can be obtained by visiting the band's web site, [www.emilystoybox.com](http://www.emilystoybox.com).) RATING 9.0/10.0

**POPTART MONKEYS – DANCING WITH MY LUNATIC (Delta 9)** If you follow the area music scene with any regularity, you likely have heard of the Poptart Monkeys. This Berwick-based quintet – singer Paul Reddon, guitarists Bill Talanca and Dave Danishefsky (who has since been replaced), bassist James Balogach and drummer Rob Hampton – drew national attention when cereal giant Kelloggs threatened to sue them over the use of "Poptart" in their name. This led to the group being billed as "Pennsylvania's most controversial band," and the resulting publicity enabled the group to quickly rise to prominence on live stages statewide. The Poptart Monkeys' debut CD, *Dancing With My Lunatic*, provides an accurate introduction to the group's varied musical persona. The album reveals the group's base sound as hard-edged, guitar-driven modern rock, but the album also reveals classic rock and even dance floor new wave influences (the latter manifested through hot remakes of Animotion's "Obsession" and EMF's "Unbelievable"). The group demonstrates their hard-rocking chops on the opening salvo "Wrecking Ball," "Choked," "Only Human," "Act of Contrition" with its bluesy guitar lead-in and "Pathetic." The Poptart Monkeys also give us agitated celebrations of current-day dancefloor etiquette on the album's first single, "Dancefloor Collision" and the moshpit-friendly "Bounce With Me." In the current trend of bands like Lit and Blink 182, the group celebrates life's daily little pitfalls on the whimsical rocker "La De Da." And on the more serious side, the Poptart Monkeys are also capable of acoustic-gear love songs, demonstrated nicely on "Doorway Home" and the spontaneously-recorded closer "Paint My World." *Dancing With My Lunatic* works because all the separate components of the Poptart Monkeys contribute to the unified whole – Paul's seriocomic vocal delivery, Bill's stern guitar riffage playing counterpoint to Dave's guitar finesse, and James and Rob underscoring it all with driving rhythms. Each song is busy-sounding, with little details becoming more evident on repeat listens. Much like the group's live show, this album rocks hard, yet the group's playful edge surfaces from time to time. Recorded and mastered at Sound Investments in Scranton, *Dancing With My Lunatic* sounds crisp and well-produced. Their Kelloggs controversy brought the Poptart Monkeys into the limelight; the strength the group's exciting live show and this powerful debut disc should keep them there. (Can be purchased at the group's local shows, or visit the web site [www.poptartmonkeys.com](http://www.poptartmonkeys.com).) RATING 8.8/10.0

**WHISKEY HIGH – CONTROLLED DISSONANCE (self-produced)** Controlled Dissonance, the new double-disc set from Pittsburgh-based heavy metal force

Whiskey High, marks a period of transition for the group. The album both bids farewell to the group's original lead singer, Scott Boyd, who left the group for personal reasons at the end of 1999; and it introduces listeners to Scott's replacement, former Defiant lead singer Chris Dittman. The album also marks the transition from Whiskey High's earlier 80's-based metal sound to its current angrier and more aggressive Pantera-rooted sound. Disc one is both live AND studio; recorded live initially, a glitch on the original vocal track recording omitted Scott's vocals, so Whiskey High overdubbed Chris' vocals in the studio over the live tracks. The sound is very authentic, and establishes that Chris can convincingly fill the shoes of his predecessor. We hear Chris' vicious bark on older Whiskey High favorites like "Anxiety" and "Sick and Tired;" plus newer songs like "Real Life," "Believe" and "Bloody and Bruised." We also hear "No Glory," which was previously titled "Axeslayer" during the Scott Boyd era of the group; and a new studio track, "Castles Burning," closes out the first disc. The second disc is a salute to Scott, as we hear Scott on studio tracks recorded before his departure. Highlights here include the defiant and proud anthem "Time;" the ode to being in the wrong place at the wrong time "Busted;" and a light- rocking ode to the joys of fatherhood, "Daddy's Boy." Produced by guitarist Mike Palone, Controlled Dissonance sounds raunchy and powerful, enabling all aspects of Whiskey High's presentation – Mike's searing leads and caustic chords; brother Rich Palone's booming drumbeats; Michael Ekis' rumbling bass and both singers – to crunch out with authority. Controlled Dissonance marks both an ending and a new beginning for Whiskey High, celebrating both where the group has been and where they are headed. (The disc can be obtained at the group's shows locally, or via their website, [www.whiskeyhigh.com](http://www.whiskeyhigh.com).) RATING 8.9/10.0

**SOUTHERN ROCK ALLSTARS – CRAZY AGAIN (Tazer Records)** Nowadays, Southern rock is enjoying its greatest popularity since the 1970's. Fueled in part by VH-1, veteran Southern acts like Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers are enjoying renewed popularity, especially on the concert circuit. And a younger generation of Southern-gearred artists such as Gov't Mule, Widespread Panic, Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies, the Black Crowes and even Kenny Wayne Shepherd have helped turn a whole new generation on to Southern rock. At first glance, it might appear that the Southern Rock Allstars are merely a group of grizzled Southern rock vets banding together to hop aboard the bandwagon of the genre's renewed success. But this isn't true. Former Blackfoot drummer Jackson Spires and former Molly Hatchet guitarist Dave Hlubek first worked together in this band's earlier incarnation, The Dixie Allstars (who headlined a concert locally at Coupon's Mountain Top Sportsmen's Club in 1990). Spires and Hlubek eventually teamed with former Rossington guitarist Jay Johnson and bassist Charles Hart (who has engineered projects for Lynyrd Skynyrd, Gov't Mule and Widespread Panic) to form the Southern Rock Allstars, who have been touring, playing the hits of their respective former bands, and road-testing the songs that wound up on this debut CD. You won't find too many surprises on Crazy Again – the sound is textbook southern-fried rock as you might expect from musicians who helped create classics like Blackfoot's "Highway Song" and Molly Hatchet's "Flirtin' With Disaster." There are rip-roaring, no-nonsense rockers like the opening track "Train of Sorrow," "Ghost of You," "Trouble's Comin,'" and "Traveller." Other highlights include the boogie swagger of the title track "Crazy Again" and "Don't Believe A Word," and two nicely arranged ballads in "Knight In Shining Armor" and "Better Off Alone." Hlubek and Spires both do respectably on lead vocal duties here, and the whole group harmonizes well, singing simple odes to life, love, hard work and hard play. True to classic Southern rock norm, the overall delivery is tough and no-nonsense, with muscular chords and lots of guitar interplay between Hlubek and Johnson. Co-

produced by Johnson and Spires, the sound is clean, balanced and full. While they won't generate the headlines or VH-1 hype of Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allmans, the Southern Rock Allstars nicely defend the faith on *Crazy Again*, and fans of southern-fried rock should find this an album worth celebrating. (For information on obtaining, visit the web site [www.southernrock.com](http://www.southernrock.com).) RATING 8.6/10.0

**FAT VINNY&THE WISEGUYS – NOT ENOUGH BLOOD (self-produced)** Fat Vinny&the Wiseguys came together late last fall as a project to play out and have fun on Altoona area stages once or twice a month. Quite unintentionally, though, the trio's first half-year together has turned out to be far more eventful. Modeling the group after the "Wiseguy" characters on the popular HBO television series *The Sopranos*, singer/guitarist E. Vincent "Fat Vinny" Kelly, bassist Randy Ketner and drummer Mark Panek found themselves receiving attention in *The Skinny*, the official online newsletter of the series; the resulting publicity led to the group being interviewed by several radio stations across the country. In late April, Fat Vinny&the Wiseguys were judged third in the first annual Moondogs Blues Challenge in Pittsburgh. And the group recently hooked up with Capitol Artist Management of Sacramento, California. The group last month entered Dave Nagle's Daylight Studios in Altoona and recorded their debut EP, *Not Enough Blood*. While the base sound is undeniably the blues, Fat Vinny&the Wiseguys show style and variety through these five songs. The Mark Panek-penned opener "The River," for instance, is slow and soulful, while the title song "Not Enough Blood" takes on a reggae flavor. "You Can't Refuse The Blues" suggests Robert Cray confronting Neil Young in a dark alley; while "The Phone Call" and "The 1:30 Blues" are more straight-ahead blues and boogie respectively. As chief lyricist, "Fat Vinny" is a very capable storyteller, demonstrated on the 'you reap what you sow' storyline of "You Can't Refuse the Blues" and the street justice plot of "The Phone Call." His words can also be observational, as on the title song "Not Enough Blood," about the conflicting forces that make a man do what he does. "Fat Vinny" delivers his words with appropriate gravel and gusto, and he displays plenty of hot guitarwork through the course of the disc as well. One of this area's top drummers, Mark's beats vary between quiet restraint and explosive bursts that command attention. The production mix is balanced and full, allowing all three of these players to shine. Fat Vinny&the Wiseguys offer "the blues you can't refuse" on *Not Enough Blood*, a very good sampler that should help this band draw even more fans and attention in the months ahead. RATING 9.1/10.0

**BUILT TO SPILL – LIVE (Warner Bros.)** Though not a household name, Boise, Idaho's Built To Spill has steadily built a following since the early 90's with several independent albums and a strong live show. The live show is celebrated on Built To Spill's latest release, *Live*. Culled from several 1999 performances, *Live* depicts Built To Spill as an adventurous entity onstage, not afraid to do some spontaneous experimenting on their instruments (a la Phish) and letting the heat of the moment dictate the direction of their performance. Singer, guitarist and band founder Doug Martsch; bassist Brett Nelson and drummer Scott Plouf boldly embrace random, progressive song structures and shifting time signatures for an alternative-leaning rock sound situated somewhere between Neil Young, Phish and Jane's Addiction. *Live*'s best moments are when Built To Spill indulge their adventurous tendencies and stretch it out; on their sincere, accurate 20-minute version of Neil Young's "Cortez the Killer;" and on the equally lengthy and indulgent closer "Broken Chairs." On both tracks, we hear Doug Martsch and guest guitarists Jim Roth (The Delusions) and Brett Netson (Caustic Resin) engage each other in spacey, atmospheric guitar distortion/reverb free-for-alls, pushing each other to the stratosphere. The remaining seven tracks are shorter and more to the point, but still represent Built To Spill's

knack for eccentric melodies and arrangements. While Doug Martsch's exciting guitar histrionics carry these performances, his flat Neil Young-meets-Perry Farrell vocal whine is an acquired taste at best. Ultimately, though, Built To Spill is about instrumental experimentation and adventurism, and as a concert performance testimonial, Live serves its purpose in convincing us as to why we should be paying more attention to this band. RATING 8.4/10.0

**CLOVE - GO (self-produced)** Clove formed in the summer of 1996, at the wedding of its two founding members and rhythm section, singer/bassist Jennifer and drummer David Cerreta. Guitarists Rick Lienhard and Kevin Badolato would eventually flesh out the Clove line-up, and the Poconos-based group has since developed into one of this region's most popular bands. Go, released this spring, is Clove's third and strongest album yet, as the group fine-tunes and further defines its bright, upbeat brand of modern pop/funk-rock. Loosely based around a theme of cars, Go is a fun, action-packed set that floors the gas pedal at the green light and cuts to the chase quickly on nearly every song. Each melody is catchy, and the band executes each with tightness and efficiency. As Clove's singer and lyricist, Jennifer Cerreta takes front and center on each song – displaying both a potent, clean, high-ranging voice; and thoughtful words as well. On the driving title track "Go," which leads off the album, Jennifer observes that ambition can lead a person astray in life, and that "On the long road to Heaven it ain't hard/To make a pit stop in Hell." The funky dance floor rocker "Desperation" and the harder-rocking "Savannah" offer clever observations about life in the fast lane; while "Family" is a reflective ode to a dysfunctional neighboring household Jennifer observed while growing up. Other highlights include the soaring ballad about music, love and spirituality "40,000 Years;" the turbocharged and hot-rodding "Mr. Bean" and "Camaro Cut;" and Jennifer's delicate treatment of the Led Zeppelin ballad "Going to California," which ends the album. Recorded and produced by Clove and Ivan Martin Justofin at Hazleton's C&C Recording Studios and mastered at Sony Music Studios in New York, Go sounds crisp, tight, full and bright. Listening to Go offers proof positive as to why Clove is one of most talked-about bands in the region, and why their star continues to rise. This is one of the best albums to emerge from the Keystone State this year. (The album can be purchased at Clove's shows locally, or by visiting the band's web site, [www.clovemusic.com](http://www.clovemusic.com).) RATING 9.5/10.0

**THE GRIMM - THE GRIMM (Attack on Culture)** What do you think of when you hear the name The Grimm? Perhaps the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, and images of gnomes and trolls lurking in an enchanted forest? Nowadays, you might be excused for thinking of a progressive-leaning hard rock band from the mountains separating Blair and Cambria Counties, who have just issued their self-titled debut disc. Formed in 1997, The Grimm - singer Bob Lee, guitarist Kirk Tonkin, bassist Kent Tonkin and drummer Ron Brode – fuse elements of shadowy modern heavy rock with a technical, progressive edge for a uniquely original sound over this CD's nine tracks (plus bonus track). Tapping influences as diverse as Rush, King Crimson, Alice In Chains, Yes, Peter Gabriel and latter Metallica, The Grimm weave together nine distinct, hard-rocking compositions, using intriguing chord progressions and odd timing signatures. Beyond their captivating arrangements and compositions, The Grimm ponder some interesting questions through the course of this album. Borrowing a line from the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, "My God, It's Full of Stars" wonders if mankind's quest for knowledge is taking us into areas where we shouldn't be messing. The funk-leaning "Control Alt Delete" suggests using our technology and knowledge to fix current problems first. On the harder-edged "Dead Time," Bob Lee asks if we as a society are making the best use of our free time for creative

purposes, or merely wasting it away being brainwashed in front of the tube. Additional highlights include the darker and introspective "Unreal," the exotic-flavored "Sunny Day in the Sargasso," the technical and schizophrenic "6's and 7's," and the Celtic-meets-crunch rock instrumental "Stoned Henge." Produced by Jason Bartlebaugh at Bellwood's B&B Studios, the bass and drums take a more prominent role in the mix, while the guitar plays a more supportive role. The Grimm explores adventurous musical terrain on their debut, and the result is an alluring musical journey well worth indulging. RATING 8.7/10.0

**NEVERMOURE – IT GETS BLACK (self-produced)** Altoona's Nevermoure has quickly established themselves as one of the most prolific bands this area has to offer; proven by this, their third disc in just over a year together. On *It Gets Black*, singer Adam Marino, guitarist Mike Ritchey, drummer Jared Campbell and new bassist Eric Swander give us their strongest set of tunes yet, blending a strong sense of melody and harmony with ample guitar-driven muscle over seven tracks (not including the additional bonus track, a naughty redneck singalong). The base sound is hard-edged, mid-to-up-tempo modern rock that sounds comfortable alongside national contemporaries like the Goo Goo Dolls and Fuel. All seven songs are strong and catchy; as Nevermoure are quickly emerging as songwriters and arrangers. The majority of these songs deal with relationship topics; the opener "Have A Nice Day" is an acidic send-off to a deceitful cohort, while "Forever Yours" is about the reluctant acceptance of a relationship. Two songs here deal with more serious topics – "Realize," a wake-up call about one's self-destructive lifestyle; and the title song "It Gets Black," about the dark consequences of an obsessive relationship gone awry. Adam Marino is fast evolving into a seasoned frontman and lyricist, whose vocal timing, presence and use of words improve with each album. And Mike Ritchey gives his finest performance yet here, not just scorching off hot lead guitar solos, but also complementing Nevermoure's melodies with timely, precise fills. Having already amassed a sizeable under-21 following with frequent appearances at the Penn State Altoona campus, Nevermoure serves notice with *It Gets Black* that they are a likely future force in this area's music scene. And if they keep delivering quality song material like this, Nevermoure's future could carry them well beyond this region. Remember the name. RATING 8.8/10.0

**BETH STALEY – RANTING (JEK Publishing)** 19-year-old Beth Staley of Johnstown traded in the artistry of figure skating four years ago for the artistry of poetry and music. That trade achieves full fruition on Beth's debut CD, *Ranting*. The album's title refers to Beth's vocal style, as she passionately rants forth heart and soul over the album's nine tracks, which blend rock, folk and jazz elements into a fresh, cohesive style and sound. Beth's singing, scattling, sighing voice carries us on a roller coaster ride of emotions and feelings through the course of each song; from playful to anguished, from soothing to worried; from graceful to angry. Beth's vocal clarity and poetic lyrics on the title song "Ranting," "Paper Mache Crowd" and "Spiritual Crime" bring to mind Tori Amos, while her occasional angrier outbursts on "Flip" and "Who's For This War" add a slight touch of Alanis Morissette-like vinegar. Beth, who also plays acoustic guitar on the album, is helped out by guitarists Dave Nichols and Paul Kuzupas; and the album's producer, Zupe, who plays keyboards, drums and bass. Recorded at Zupe's Woposonic Studios in Altoona, *Ranting* sounds clear, concise, intelligent and graceful, with Beth's artistry and passion shining throughout. Beth Staley's *Ranting* is a personal, expressive album that shines with grace, intelligence, delicacy and intensity; it is an album that will touch each listener in a different way. (Can be purchased at Oswald Music Center in Johnstown, and

other Johnstown area music stores, or write Beth at P.O. Box 5401, Johnstown, PA 15904-5401.) RATING 9.1/10.0

**THE FULL TIME KINGS - JAILTOWN REDEMPTION (814)** Punk has seen a resurgence in popularity over the past few years, spearheaded by the breakthrough mainstream successes of Green Day, Rancid, the Offspring and others. But today's radio punk stars really don't tap the spontaneity and go-for-broke excitement of early punk; Green Day, Rancid, the Offspring and their ilk all have the luxury of major studio production, and the results sound polished and calculated. But there are bands out there that capture that spontaneous combustion, one-take/no-overdubs old-school style of punk. Area punksters the Full Time Kings are such a band. This half-Hollidaysburg/half-Ebensburg collaboration lets it fly with glorious old-school Ramones-styled punk, featuring hyperspeed beats, swarming guitars, and singer Jon Flude's bratty lead voice. From the distortion opening of "Everyday's Saturday" to open the album, to the bonus track "First Time," the Kings let it fly with reckless abandon, pushing it to the brink and threatening to go off the tracks and crash at any time. But while the Full Time Kings slam it full-throttle, they show a knack for catchy, simple melodies and hummable choruses throughout the course of Jailtown Redemption. My favorite tunes here include "Everyday's Saturday," "The Corner of Lonely and Nowhere," "Devil Woman," "Don't Bother Me," "17<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Blues" (an Altoona reference!) and "Rebel Son," also the angrier and more volatile "Out To Dry." Listeners with heart, asthma and respiratory problems might want to keep an oxygen mask handy when listening to this; it will push you to exhaustion! Old school punk with attitude, fire and fury – the Full Time Kings' Jailtown Redemption is a slam-bang joyride start-to-finish, and an album that makes me anxious to check out what this band's live show is about. BUY OR DIE! (Can be purchased at the band's shows, or write The Full Time Kings, P.O. Box 345, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. You can also e-mail [swan182@aol.com](mailto:swan182@aol.com), and check out the Kings' website at [www.x814x.com](http://www.x814x.com).) RATING 9.0/10.0

**CLOWNDOG RIOT – CLOWNDOG RIOT (Raney Recording Studio)** From Bill and Hillary's homeland of Arkansas, Clowndog Riot was the lone band I got to witness during my recent vacation in the Outer Banks (recap later this issue). I was impressed with these guys live, and I'm impressed with this CD. Clowndog Riot gives us the hard-hitting metallic modern rock mayhem we all know and love – punishing rhythms from drummer Robert Hannah and bassist Grant Hannah; gnashing buzzsaw guitar carnage from Brandon Gillihan and Blake Hall, topped by the convincing vocal talents of lead voice Josh Newcom. Josh can sing, snarl like a rabid razorback, gangsta rap and scream psychotica with the best of them, displayed throughout the album. All ten songs are powerful and hard-hitting yet unique; out of the vicious dog into the album kicks off with the group's apparent manifesto, the boisterous "Riot." Equally volatile is "Fall Down" with its assertive lyrics striving for success on one's own terms, topping an explosive metallic soundscape. Other highlights include the dark and shadowy "The Blame," the full-charging "Tie Me Down," the pseudo-love song "Let Me Fall;" the proud and confident "It's Not Me," the somber "Live a Lie," and two explosive closers in "Leave Me Alone" and "The End." While Clowndog Riot obviously can play it loud and metallic, they reveal a deeper sense of melody and song structure on "The Blame," "Let Me Fall" and "Live a Lie," showing songwriting talents beyond the norm for this genre. The production is full-throttled and in your face; this album was made to be cranked loud! Clowndog Riot is a powerful debut; if the band plays up this way be sure to check them out, and get a hold of this CD while you're at it – you will not be disappointed! (For information on obtaining, visit

the group's web site, [www.clowndogriot.com](http://www.clowndogriot.com), or write to Clowndog Riot, P.O. Box 841, Heber Springs, AR 72543.) RATING 8.9/10.0

**ROTTING CHRIST – KHROSOS (Century Media)** Just when you thought it was safe, Satanic death metal returns. As the name might indicate, Rotting Christ is into music and lyricism on the dark side. As Jim Rome might say, "Oh the HORROR!" But Christendom need not worry – like many flawed Satanic bands before them, Rotting Christ is also of the mistaken notion that having a frontman that spews garbled vocalisms like a badly intoxicated Tazmanian Devil is going to win His Darkness new followers. Maybe so, provided listeners of this album stop laughing their asses off long enough to attempt to make any sense out of this unintelligible mess! The only thing these Greek purveyors of eternal hellfire have going for them is musicianship, as they are competent players and axemen Sakis and Kostas execute some lethal guitar solo fireworks through the album. But the songs themselves aren't particularly standout or interesting, and even less so when you can't comprehend a damn thing the lead voice is vomiting! Until bands like this can come up with frontmen we can understand, I don't think albums like this will get anyone hooked on demonics any time soon. Avoid... RATING 3.8/10.0

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## AND NOW, A FEW DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS...

### **STEELY DAN – TWO AGAINST NATURE** *By D'Wiseguy*

Well, friendly listeners, it's been twenty years since the last offering from the infamous studio unit named after a dildo in a William Burroughs novel. "Two Against Nature" hit stores on Leap Day this year, an odd day to release a very odd album by a very odd band.

The first track that really caught my ears was, of course, the single "Cousin Dupree" a typically "Steely" little number about a "down home family romance". If you liked "Cousin Dupree", with all it's jazz influenced hooks, gleefully demented lyrics and slick production, you should sop up the rest of "Two against nature" like a couple of William Burroughs characters going after bug powder. Other highlights include "Runaway Jane", "It's a shame about me", "Gaslighting Annie" and the title track is a Steely Dan fan's delight. That's the key here. Steely Dan is notorious for their heady lyrics, and "way too cool" sonic landscaping. If you are not a "Dan Fan" already, this CD probably won't make you one. WARNING: IF YOU HAVE YELLED "FREEBIRD!" OR "SWEET HOME ALABAMA!" OR "DUDE, PLAY SOME METALLICA" AT ANY LIVE GIG FOR ANY BAND IN THE PAST 20 YEARS, YOU WILL HATE THIS ALBUM. Don't worry about it, Walter Becker and Donald Fagen didn't make this record for you, anyway. For those of us who do love the demented lyrical and musical twists and turns that only Steely Dan can provide, "Two against nature" is a must have.

Musically, this is the "Steely Dan" you have come to expect. While Fagen's vocals have always been flawed, they are executed here, as well as, if not better than, any other Steely Dan offering, ever. The rest of the CD is as impeccable an effort as you'd expect. The only thing new on "Two against nature" as far as the musicianship is concerned is the lack of superstar sit-ins. Believe it or not, studio six-string wizards like Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, and Larry Carlton aren't missed, Walter Becker produces a smorgasbord of tasty chops all on his own.

If you have always hated Steely Dan, this album is a reminder of why, if you have

always loved Steely Dan, this album is a reminder of why. Personally, I can't wait for the tour. 8.5 Damn good CD.

### **B.B. KING AND ERIC CLAPTON - RIDIN WITH THE KING** *By D'Wiseguy*

I am probably the wrong guy to be reviewing this CD. After all, we are talking about my two favorite guitarists, so I'm probably not the most objective person but I was asked, so here goes:

If aliens landed and asked for a definition of "cool", I'd probably sit them down with a copy of this CD. When I say "cool", I don't mean "kewl", or the radical, over the top, earring in your nose, kind of cool, I'm talking about old school cool, I'm talking about the Humphrey Bogart, Al Pacino in Godfather II, Frank Sinatra with Dean, Sammy and Joey Bishop, kind of cool. Cool with class, swagger, pride and just enough arrogance to be charming, that kind of cool. In Short, I mean to say "The Gentleman's cool".

From the opening guitar riffs in the title track to until the last ring of the cymbal fades on the final cut, this CD is cool. While Nathan East does his usual superb job with the bass, Doyle Bramhall and Joe Sample do excellent work with keyboards, and Steve Gadd is his usual rock steady self on the drums, this CD makes no bones about the fact that it is nothing less that a blues guitar lover's utopia. B.B. King has never played with more energy and sang with more gusto than he does here.

Clapton's performance makes me want spray paint "Clapton is God" on every open space I can find. (By the way, I like this CD, can you tell?) It is my one prayer that these guys decide to do some dates together, somewhere that I can get tickets to. If you call yourself a fan of the blues, this is definitely a buy or die. My only problem with it was there wasn't more. (9.99999/10)

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## **DA BOY FROM DA BURGH**

*By Mark Da Boy*

Wow! We're burnin' through 2000, aren't we? Just like a broken record each report, I'd like to thank The Professor, J.P., for accommodating my alter ego group – The Mark Allen Project – on Q-94's "Backyard Rocker" in April. Big kudos to guitarist Monte Erwin for tagging along for the ride. I'm amazed that it's taken this long for someone to realize Jim's political potential to run this country! Vote J.P. for our country! Remember me when you make it to the White House! Oh, and thanks for showing up again at the Gin Mill to catch Felony In Progress!

Well, no grill team for me this summer. Instead, the 3-W-S Morning Show Orchestra will be making appearances in the Pittsburgh area. That's Craig Zinger and Kenny Woods on keyboards and me on the electronic drums. First date: the 911<sup>th</sup> Air Force Airlift Wing Show the first weekend in June. I got my KISS tickets for May 25<sup>th</sup> at Star Lake and June 19<sup>th</sup> at Erie. This is the final hurrah for the painted ones. Don't miss it!!

Da Girl has been bakin' her buns off with her dessert business! She's been thinking about buying a building and opening up a store. We'll have to see what happens...if you smell what Da Girl...is cookin!

**REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS**

I purchased a bunch of new stuff! I'll try to keep the wording down to a minimum...  
**STEELY DAN – TWO AGAINST NATURE (Giant)** The studio wonderband of the 70's is breaking a twenty year hiatus. Is this a "Royal Scam?" Are they just "Reelin' in the Years?" Lead singer/keyboardist Donald Fagen and guitarist Walter Becker with their interchangeable cast of musicians have unleashed a tamer, more mature musical statement...kinda middle-aged punk jazz with a slight blues rock edge. The only song that "cuts loose" is their first single – "Cousin Dupree" – a playful ode to wishful incest. Steely Dan has always been known for tongue in cheek, cynical lyrics that tell a story. "What A Shame About Me" is an engaging conversation between college sweethearts who meet years later by chance encounter – she is now a famous actress, while he's "Stackin' cutouts at The Strand." This is one of those CD's that you put on in the background, only to notice later just how much you really like it.

RATING 8.5/10.0

**FOO FIGHTERS – NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE (RCA)** I don't know if I previously reviewed this disc or not. If I did, compare notes! Dave Grohl's third post Kurtvana effort finds the band comfortably happy with their sound. The stand out is the blatantly commercial smash "Learn to Fly." (Plus a great video to boot!) Other than that, the disc just plods along. The one riff is a dead-on rip off of Foghat's "Slow Ride. Dave's singing is pretty good here. I still have no idea what the heck he's singing about. So if you're the slightest bit curious, give it a whirl. You've got nothing left to lose...except a couple bucks...

RATING 8.5/10.0

**SMASH MOUTH – ASTRO LOUNGE (Interscope)** The kings of Alterna-fun are back with their unique brand of retro 60's grooves. The hits are here – "All Star," "Can't Get Enough of You Baby," and "Then the Morning Comes" (already being used for a commercial jingle). This sophomore collection is chock full of surf guitars, cheesy organ, reggae, and pop sensibility. "Come On Come On" would be my choice as a single – with its Cheap Trick influenced feel. There's some filler, such as their ode to wacky weed "Stoned," and their ode to roadies "Road Man." This is a much tamer band than before...no swear words (a welcomed change of pace), but the crunch riffs are almost non-existent. It's hard to tell if this group has the staying power as a "fun band." Hopefully, these all stars have what it takes to mature with their audience.

RATING 8.5/10.0

**BEN HARPER&THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS – BURN TO SHINE (Virgin)** I'm impressed by bands who like to dabble in other styles of music. From the Beatles, to Queen to Sugar Ray, some bands take chances...(hell, the MAP is notorious for that!). But don't be deceived by bands that release kick ass songs, only to discover that it is THAT song that is the exception, not the rule! I've heard two Ben Harper songs – "Faded" – which is a cool rip-off of Led Zeppelin's "Nobody's Fault But Mine," and his current hit and title release – "Burn to Shine" – which flat out rocks! Imagine my surprise, and disappointment, to hear the other crap that Ben is passing off. Spaghetti western themes, dumb vaudeville ditties, and more slow songs than a Celine Dion greatest hits collection! What's up wit dat? There is "Burn To Shine," a cute hip-hop pop song "Steal My Kisses," and a blues gospel song "Show Me A Little Shame" that isn't bad, but that's it! I know some industry types are making him out to be a musical visionary, but I don't share in that vision. Burn to Shine? Burn out! RATING 5.0/10.0

**THE CLASH – FROM HERE TO ETERNITY LIVE (Epic)** Most “music” critics will point to Clash’s 1979 two LP set London Calling as one of their all time favorite rock albums...myself included. It’s such a shame that I never got to see them live before the “artistic differences.” Now Epic has produced a single live CD that hints at the power and the punk that is/was The Clash. Pulled together from performances from ‘78 to ‘82, you can hear the rapid maturity in their song writing. One gets the feeling that at any time the song could fall apart, which is part of the charm. No polish...just turn it up and see what happens. Most of the selections feature Joe Strummer’s barking vocals. Whether this was done on purpose, I don’t know. The hits are here – “should I Stay Or Should I Go,” “Train In Vain,” “The Magnificent Seven” (one of the first rock/rap songs!), and “I Fought The Law.” Sorry...no “Casbah.” The recording quality is hollow in spots, but that’s part of the charm. Recently, Epic re-released the Clash’s entire catalog. Could this be a hint to a reunion of the Godpunkers? Hope so... **RATING 8.2/10.0**

**LENNY KRAVITZ – 5 (Virgin)** It’s taken me some time to finally buy this one, but it was worth it. Lenny is one of those guys who looks the part of a rock star. And now, the man who was a slave to retro funk/rock has dropped the dreadlocks and modernized his sound somewhat. Hip-hop beats, modern synths, the patented “distortion alternative vocal” routine, and a harder edge have permeated his sound and is retrofitted for the new century. Most of his musings take a positive message with double meaning. Is he talking about the love of God or the love of another person, or both? It’s just refreshing in this day and age of gloom rock. And Virgin has been cool enough to rerelease 5 with the Guess Who remake – “American Woman.” If there’s a downside to Lenny, it’s his lack of editing. Most of these tracks go on forever! At least five minutes-plus per song, with repeated choruses eating up half the time! At any rate, it seems like 5 is Lenny’s lucky number. And it’ll be your lucky number too! **RATING 8.5/10.0**

### **VISITING THE MECCA! JIM PRICE’S MUSEUM OF MUSIC – APRIL 2000**

To give you a feeling for this article, first I want to take you back to some moments of amazement. The Smithsonian in D.C. – 1990. Got to see a piece of moonrock. Just to be mere feet away was awe-inspiring! Gettysburg – 1991. I was blown away to view Lincoln’s rough draft of the Gettysburg Address. A piece of paper that he didn’t think much of, but to me it was inspirational. Pittsburgh – January 2000. I am a huge fan of King Kong, Godzilla, and The Night of the Living Dead movies...pretty much a closet monster movie fan. I have made friends with a man who happens to write for monster magazines around the world for a living! He invited me into his house to see his incredible collection. Needless to say, I was speechless and embarrassed by my lack of monster movies and collectibles as compared to his gargantuan shrine to all that is spooky.

Which brings me to April 2000. Easter weekend, to be exact. I was in Altoona and decided to pay a call on J.P., visit his house and hang with him later that night. He showed me around the house. OK, okay I thought. This man has obviously neglected to show me his music collection. Do I ask? Is it like the Batcave? Once I see it, will I ever be able to leave? So I asked. “Where’s this famous music collection of yours?” Silence. Have I broken a friendship? Is it something one doesn’t ask of the Professor? “It’s in the basement,” he says casually.

Jim proceeds to lead me down the catacombs of his basement to his shrine. I rub my eyes in disbelief as I try to take it all in at once. Thousands of albums, CD’s, tapes, reels and photo albums grace the endless shelves and align the walls! A virtual history of Altoona music fills the photo albums, as he teases me with trinkets of pictures. Like a vinyl archaeologist, he shows me rare finds of import releases by

groups who flashed and panned. As he is talking to me, I so much wanted to rummage through on my own. Find those lost gems and savor in the victory...but alas, I have spent too much of Mr. Price's valuable time to pursue further. He informed me that I am one of an elite few who have seen the cellar and lived to tell the tale. No skulls or lost bones to speak of. I can only hope that someday, I can make the voyage to Altoona and visit the mecca one more time. Thank you, J.P., for humbling this poor excuse of a music collector!

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## **MORE CHOICE CUTS**

*By guest reviewer Todd Batzel*

### **MOGG/WAY – CHOCOLATE BOX**

In between UFO's already classic '97 "Walk on Water" and their upcoming release, the only thing to whet my UFO appetite is this Mogg/Way disc. Mogg/Way is basically UFO without Michael Schenker. Unfortunately, these guys need Michael. Every band need Michael ! Not that this is a bad disc – in fact it is very good. There are just no standout cuts amongst them. . . No "Lights Out", "Self-Made Man", or "Doctor, Doctor" type tunes that will stick with you for many years to come. Therefore, this CD is recommended only for the very serious UFO fanatic. Otherwise, it is a pass.

Rating 1 devil horn in the air ^--^ (you know, the hook'em horns sign if you're from Texas)

### **DEAD END KIDS – YOU DON'T LIKE IT, WE DON'T CARE**

These guys have been absolutely legendary in the Philadelphia and NJ areas for over 20 years. It amazes me that such an influential band as this has never been noticed by the major labels. Every single 80s glam/metal band that came out of the Philly area has to some degree been influenced by these guys. Lets start with Cinderella and Teeze's blatant rip-off of their stage show to Britny Fox and Metalwolf who have "copied" DEK's trend of covering obscure Alex Harvey Band tunes. It escapes me how the 80's metal explosion came and went with these guys sitting on the sidelines. Finally, after 20 years obscurity, DEK have released a CD. It is on a small, independent label, but at least some of their classics have been recorded. There are some great tunes here, ranging from a UFO sound (yeah!) to Whitesnake style bluesy metal to AC/DC all-out riffage. I think this band is in a semi-dormant state right now, playing only a few shows per year with each member working on some side-projects. This CD is highly recommended for fans of classic hard rock/ heavy metal.

^--^ ^--^ Rating: 2 devil horns in the air.

### **ANNIHILATOR – CRITERIA FOR A BLACK WIDOW**

This is the CD that Megadeth should have put out instead of their shameful effort on "Risk". It is somewhat ironic that Annihilator guitarist/leader Jeff Waters was originally asked to join Megadeth before Marty Friedman got the job (and recently quit it). The tunes on this disc are all extremely heavy and dark, apparently a result of Waters recent divorce. The styles range from thrashy metal to a modern sounding hard rock - all kept interesting by Waters superb axework. The only downside is the vocals are sometimes too cookie monster-ish, and many of these tunes could be improved with a more melodic vocalist.

Overall, still a great disc though deserving of 1.5 devil horns in the air. ^--^ ^-

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## THE FINAL FRAME

*Movie/video reviews with D'Scribe*

**POPTART MONKEYS (Red Giant rock-umentary)** Anybody who follows area music these days has likely heard of the Poptart Monkeys, their run-in with cereal giant Kelloggs, and their rise to prominence as one of this state's premiere rock/party bands. This nearly 15-minute rock-umentary, produced by Red Giant Home Video, nicely captures what this band is about, both onstage and off. Interview clips with all five band members are interspersed with live performance footage shot at the Coal Hole in Shamokin. We get a good overview of the five personalities that make up the Monkeys, and we get a sense of the chemistry between the comic craziness of singer Paul Reddon, guitarist Bill Talanca and bassist James Balogach and the band's two apparent straightmen, drummer/ringleader Rob Hampton and lead guitarist Dave Danishefsky. We frequently get taken to the Coal Hole show, to see the Monkeys belt out current faves like the Goo Goo Dolls' "Slide" and Godsmack's "Whatever;" and the crowd energy as fans at stagefront jump up and down and celebrate. The vid accurately depicts what you get at a Poptart Monkeys show – a band that can definitely kick serious ass onstage, while having fun and generating a seriocomic atmosphere doing it. The rock-umentary is rated R; Paul drops one f-bomb onstage during the Coal Hole footage, and there is some pleasantly unexpected frontal nudity towards the end of the video (WOWWADDARACK!!!!). Whether you're a new or old Poptart fan looking for a keepsake souvenir of the group, or a club owner considering booking these guys into your venue (do it, they put on a helluva show!), Poptart Monkeys the video is worth checking out. (Can be purchased at the group's shows, or contact Pegasus Concerts at (570) 752-8238; or visit the band's website at <http://www.poptartmonkeys.com>)

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## IT'S BAAAACK!!! THE RETURN OF... FROM THE BUDGET BIN

*Pinching Pennies and Discovering Good and Not So Good Music, Cheap...with D'Scribe*

For those unfamiliar with this feature...Speaking as somebody who works in radio, let's just say I know the necessity of mastering the talent of stretching a dollar. And over the years I've learned how to apply that talent when it comes to music, too – the cut-out bin, or budget bin. I've ransacked many a budget bin over the years in search of good, cheap music. And I'm about to share some of my recent finds with you.

Setting the stage for this session of Budget Bin...I was ready to run one of my monthly delivery routes for PA Musician recently, the route that covers Clearfield and northern Cambria County – a.k.a. my "mountain route." Normally while driving from destination to destination, I listen to the local radio stations from that neck of the woods. But on this particular day, I happened to open a bedroom drawer to reveal several tapes I had purchased in budget bins over the past year or two. All three of these tapes were purchased for less than a buck each from local budget bins in the Altoona area during the past two years. I decided instantly that I would unwrap

these tapes, give them a listen during my journey, and resurrect From The Budget Bin as an economically-minded public service to the Final Cut readership...After all, as it says in our disclaimer at the back of this rag, "We are cheap and proud of it."

**RAGE – PERFECT MAN (Noise/BMG, 1988)** Nowadays, when most people hear references to the name Rage, they think of Rage Against The Machine. But there are and have been several bands named Rage through the course of rock history. One Rage, from the late 70's and early 80's, was British and did Foghat-styled boogie rock. And then there is this Rage, a German power metal band together since the mid 80's, with their 1988 album Perfect Man. If you're into screaming Yngwie-esque guitar solos, high-flying vocal acrobatics a la Rob Halford or Bruce Dickinson, volatile double-kick bass drum thunder and rapidfire attacking rhythms and chord changes, this album is for you. Singer/bassist/songwriter Peter "Peavey" Wagner apparently overhauled Rage's entire line-up from their 1986 album Reign Of Fear and slimmed the line-up to a trio, with Manni handling the guitar duties and Chris the manic drumwork. As power and speed metal of this period go, this album kicks ass. "Peavey" shows a knack for blending song hooks and action-packed, histrionic arrangements, so the majority of these tunes stick in your head and speedbang your socks off! And if you listen to the lyrics, you find "Peavey" also had some interesting words too – the title track "Perfect Man" is a commentary against genetic experimentation, possibly inspired by East Germany's experiments with athletes during the Cold War years. "Sinister Thinking" is about killing and warfare in the name of organized religion. "Death In The Afternoon" states that money means nothing when your number's up, and you can't take it with you. The playing is fast and furious; Manni's guitarwork smokes throughout the album, and Chris' slamming drumwork will leave you exhausted. Rage is still around; they contribute a version of "Jawbreaker" on the new Judas Priest tribute album Delivering The Goods Vol. II (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). Fans of classic high-speed power metal will find Perfect Man an absolute steal for the 99 cents I paid for it; if you spot it in the cut-out bin, absolute BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.3/10.0

**GIANT – LAST OF THE RUNAWAYS (A&M, 1989)** How fleeting this thing called success in the music business can be. In 1989, British rockers Giant, riding on the breakthrough success of the radio hits "I'm A Believer" and "I'll See You In My Dreams" from this album, seemed poised to take over the music world. Now, ten years after Giant's fifteen minutes of fame, I picked up Last Of The Runaways for 99 cents in a cut-out bin! The tale of the tape for Giant was a simple case of bad timing – their melodic brand of Foreigner- and Bon Jovi-styled pop metal hit paydirt in 1989; Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder turned the rock world upside down in 1990. Had this album come out a decade earlier, I'd be playing Giant tunes on Q94 for a living! But for what it is worth now, Last Of The Runaways was a pretty good exercise in melodic hard rock. Giant's chief focal point was frontman/guitarist/songwriter Dann Huff. Dann crafted most of this album's song hooks including the two big hits, he provided the tuneful Bon Jovi-ish lead voice, and flashed amazing guitar fireworks throughout the album, particularly the hot guitar lead that introduces "I'm A Believer." Part of Giant's success on this album was the balance between Dann's guitar muscle and Alan Pasqua's keyboard edge; Pasqua's keyboard groan nicely underscores the hit ballad "I'll See You In My Dreams." When all of Giant's strengths came together here, more often than not, this album worked. Commercial rockers like "Innocent Days," "I Can't Get Close Enough," "Shake Me Up" and "Hold Back The Night" were strong enough arguments for hit singles as well, and the ballad "It Takes Two" could stand alongside the best ballads Journey and Foreigner ever created. The group also gives a competent exercise in funk-laced rock

in "No Way Out." Giant would put out one other album, 1992's *Time To Burn*, again another case of a fine melodic hard rock album smothered under the heavy inundation of grunge onto the music scene. For the hit singles alone, *Last Of The Runaways* is easily worth the 99 cents I paid for it; if you're a fan of quality melodic hard rock and spot this one in a cut-out bin, grab it! **RATING 8.9/10.0**

**BARDEUX – BOLD AS LOVE (Synthicide/Enigma, 1988)** Yuck. Sometimes there is risk in ransacking the budget bin. Often you can take a chance on a cheap cut-out and discover a decent album (like the two albums above); and often you can wind up with a total piece of dung like this. When I first saw the two big-haired, leather-and-spandex-clad chicks on the album cover, I thought Bardeux might be a Vixen-wannabee bandwagon act or something. But as I popped this tape into the deck while cruising south on Route 53 between Madera and Irwona, imagine my utter dismay when I heard sugary sweet, tootsy-cutesy synth-pop dance music a la Tiffany and Debbie Gibson. Only these two chicks – named Acacia and Jaz (give me a break!) – sang with about as much passion and emotion as a blow-up doll deflating. I endured the opening track, "Magic Carpet Ride" (thankfully NOT a remake of the Steppenwolf classic!), and lasted maybe a minute into the second song, "Three Time Lover," before hastily pulling my car off the road near Glen Hope and forcefully yanking this dreg from my tape deck...Oh the HORROR! Bardeux isn't bad enough to make me want to eat a 12-gauge, but it's damn close! Avoid! **RATING 2.0/10.0**

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## CONNOISSEUR CUT

*Ransacking D'Scribe's Album Collection*

**URIAH HEEP – ABOMINOLOG (Polygram, 1982)** When you think of the British band Uriah Heep, you likely think of the classic early 70's model fronted by the late David Byron. The Byron-fronted Heep was a prominent force in early 70's rock, giving us classics like "Easy Livin,'" "Sweet Lorraine" and "Stealin.'" The group faded from the limelight as the 70's progressed, and were all but forgotten as the rock world turned the corner into the 1980's. But in the early 80's, the New Wave of British Heavy Metal suddenly thrust hard rock and metal back to the forefront of rock music, and catching a ride on that Wave, Uriah Heep caught their second wind, making a triumphant comeback with 1982's *Abominog*. The 1982 edition of Heep featured mainstays Mick Box on guitars and Lee Kerslake on drums; plus bassist Bob Daisley, keyboard player John Sinclair and lead singer Peter Goalby. While the David Byron-fronted edition of Uriah Heep relied on a heavier sound and a more ominous-sounding keyboard edge, early 1980's Uriah Heep had streamlined their approach and grasped a more pop-based rock sound consistent with contemporaries like Rainbow and Foreigner. Ken Hensley's sinister keyboard groan had given way to John Sinclair's synthesizer presence; and despite the evil-looking red demon on the album cover, *Abominog* signaled a more pop-oriented direction from this edition of Uriah Heep. Songs about demons and wizardry had given way to songs about partying and women. The group attempted to crack the dance floor with their update of Russ Ballard's disco-rock hit "On The Rebound;" and gave us numerous pop-flavored rockers like "Chasing Shadows," "That's The Way That It Is," "Think It Over," and "Hot Night In A Cold Town;" even a near-power ballad in "Prisoner." The album still had its share of good moments, most notably the darker-flavored rocker "Sell Your Soul," which garnered the group its strongest FM radio airplay since the

Byron era. Also strong were the opening rocker "Too Scared To Run," the closest this album sounds to early-70's Heep; the funk-edged rocker "Hot Persuasion" and the strong finisher "Running All Night (With the Lion)." Peter Goalby's voice fit this material well; he displayed clarity, power and range. Ashley Howe's production provided a crisp balance between the guitars and synth, and overall, this was a good-sounding album. On the strength of "Sell Your Soul" and "On The Rebound," Abominog gave this incarnation of Uriah Heep 15 minutes' worth of comeback attention, before the group again faded into obscurity. Mick Box still has Uriah Heep going, and the group released an album just last year, Sonic Origami. Ultimately, though it will always be overshadowed by the legendary earlier output of Uriah Heep, Abominog put the group back on the musical map in the early 80's, and is a worthwhile listen should you decide to check it out.

RATING 8.5/10.0

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## Dark Moments in Music History

*Contributed by D'Brother*

12. November 3, 1987: Knowing how much her kids loved "Star Wars," a naive Tipper Gore rushes home with a newly-bought "Luke Skywalker and 2-Live Crew" CD.
11. August 16, 1969: At a party for her 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, Madonna Louise Ciccone is strangely unfazed when Vinny Martello stuffs two ice cream cones down the front of her dress.
10. July 18, 1966: "Let's let Ringo sing one. No harm in that, is there?"
9. September 22, 1968: Baffled by audiences' lack of enthusiasm about a deaf, dumb and blind shuffleboard champ, Pete Townshend heads dejectedly down to the corner pub.
8. June 3, 1958: In an attempt to impress his piano teacher, young Barry Manilow changes keys in the middle of his rendition of "Heart&Soul"—three times.
7. September 2, 1997: Lou Bega finishes "Mambo #4," decides his symphony needs one more movement.
6. May 4, 1956: In Toronto, Neil Young's tonsillectomy causes no damage to his larynx, thereby not robbing him of his voice.
5. August 12, 1986: "Congratulations Mr. Hanson—it's another boy!"
4. July 29, 1974: "Soup or sandwich today, Ms. Cass?"
3. November 8, 1980: Mark David Chapman can't quite scrounge up \$50 for shooting lessons. A month later, his attempted assassination of Yoko Ono goes horribly awry.

2. September 6, 1977: Due to a misprint on his high school schedule, Kenny G. attends "Sax Education" class. and the Number 1 Dark Moment in Music History...
1. March 30, 1968: An alien craft leaves a baby on the doorstep of the Dion farm just outside of Montreal, Canada.

## **OBX – THE BIG ADVENTURE 2000**

*What D'Scribe, Sparky D'Engineer, Big Jim and Mike D'Key did on their OBX vacation by D'Scribe*

The Final Cut brought you play-by-play coverage of D'Scribe's, Big Jim's and The Beer God's adventures and misadventures in Florida during an unforgettable week in early April of last year. After an adventure like that, you knew a sequel was on the way.

Initially, another sojourn to Florida had been planned for early spring. But attrition reduced the field of journey revelers to just two (D'Scribe & Big Jim), and as the game plan had been to drive to Florida, it was decided that Florida was too big a driving undertaking for just two people, and plans for that trip were scrapped.

But while the Florida return visit had been scuttled for the time being, the desire to travel had not been dampened. Enter Sparky D'Engineer, who set the wheels in motion for another vacation trip, to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Dates were selected, plans were formulated, and the travel team was assembled. Sparky, D'Scribe, Big Jim, and Sparky's Johnstown cohort Mike D'Key would undertake the expedition to the Outer Banks, seeking to conquer, pillage, and paint the town in this quiet and tranquil vacation area.

Patiently we all waited, counting the days until the sojourn was to begin.

### **DAY ONE: HEAVY RAIN, HEAVY ON THE CRUST**

We pulled out of Toonytown early Friday afternoon. Having mapped out a route that would steer us clear of the Washington D.C. beltway rush hour traffic jams, Sparky D'Engineer informed us that the trip to OBX would be an interesting one, with roadside highlights and attractions along the way. He was correct, as we discovered roadside highlights, plus a few highlights from Mother Nature we didn't expect along the way.

Our route first took us down the familiar I-99 south/Route 30 east path to the undisputed center of the known universe, Breezewood, PA. We hopped on I-70 South, and then diverted onto Route 522 south across the state borders through Maryland into West Virginia, and the town of Berkeley Springs. Nice quaint little town, with a nice-looking municipal park and lots of antique shops. And the Sheetz stores in West Virginia are permitted to sell beer, too!

After a brief pit stop at the Sheetz, we were again on our way south on 522 past the state border into Virginia. The first major town we hit inside Virginia was Winchester, and it was here that we got our first real taste of the South – Waffle House. If you drive down South, you know what Waffle House is. For the uninitiated, Waffle Houses are roadside breakfast/waffle joints that pop up every other mile or so as you drive along Interstates throughout the South and West. Okay, I was exaggerating a little bit...they pop up every FIVE miles or so. The primary cuisine, as

you might have surmised given the name - WAFFLES. Regular waffles, pecan waffles, strawberry and blueberry waffles, ham and waffles, steak and waffles, bacon and waffles, sausage and waffles, eggs and waffles, salsa and waffles, hotdogs sauerkraut and waffles, pizza waffles, teriyaki waffles, buffalo wing waffles...oops, sorry, I'm exaggerating again. But lotsa waffles, other breakfast foods, burgers, sandwiches, even steaks...all at refreshingly low prices. The atmosphere inside is a little bit greasy-spoon-ish, but you can get a full meal at Waffle House for under ten bucks - hell, we need a few of those around here!

Other things to know about Winchester, Virginia - nearly every business has "apple" in the title, so I assume apples are a pretty big crop in this neck of the woods. If you're into fresh produce, there's a big farm market, the Virginia Farm Market, along Route 522 just before you hit town - Sparky swears by the peaches you can buy here! And be careful when you drive through this burg, as the highway signs are significantly smaller than we are accustomed to here in PA, and if you aren't watching carefully, you'll miss your highway sign and get lost!

After departing Winchester, we headed south through Virginia along Route 17. And as we headed south, so did the weather, as we maneuvered through a labyrinth of storm clouds during the course of our journey. One of the storms provided a surprise highlight as we traversed Warrenton, VA - lightning struck a power transformer near the highway, causing a loud bang, a bright flash and a shower of electrical sparks (which awakened Big Jim and myself from our respective slumbers in the back seat).

Sparky D'Engineer pointed out several interesting landmarks along the way, including the huge roller skate near Warrenton, VA; the Geico Insurance taj mahal, and the southernmost Sheetz convenience store near Fredericksburg, VA.

Eventually, we exited onto I-95 heading south. Even though our route steered us clear of the D.C. traffic mess, we discovered heavy traffic on I-95 between D.C. and Richmond. And shortly after we got on I-95, we ran into a thunderstorm with the mother of all torrential downpours to deluge our journey. Sparky calmly proceeded southward, while many lesser drivers pulled off the road.

We soon weaved our way around the southeastern Virginia highway and interstate system, sidestepping Richmond, Norfolk, Suffolk, Newport News (though we did pass their loading docks and shipyard) and Virginia Beach.

By this time, the sun was setting on our journey, as we neared the North Carolina border. When we hit the state border, we hit the Border Station. A combination convenience store/eatery/supply/souvenir shop, the Border Station sits directly on the state border, with the border line running along the floor and bisecting the shop. On the Virginia side of the shop, you could buy Virginia lottery tickets; walk across the state border into the North Carolina half of the shop, and you could then buy North Carolina lottery tickets. Another curious discovery was that you can buy Hershey bottled chocolate drink here - something I have never seen on sale here in PA!

With the air thick with the smell of the ocean, we proceeded on the final stretch of road towards our hotel accommodations in Kitty Hawk, about an hour's drive away. We arrived at the Holiday Inn Express and procured our hotel rooms, before walking the mere two blocks to the beach to check out the nocturnal crashing of ocean waves. We had arrived in paradise.

Some six hours removed from our Winchester Waffle House experience, our next order of business was FOOD!

We drove up and down the strip, seeking out eateries that were still open (it was now after 10 PM by this point) and plotting possible mealtime strategies for the remainder of our visit. We soon spotted a viable candidate to satisfy our hunger needs - Van's Pizza.

Upon entering Van's, we learned they were running an all-you-can-eat pizza and salad bar buffet deal for \$7.95. Seemed reasonable enough, so we went for it.

In the next few days, we would hear commercials on the local radio stations for this establishment, advertising Van's Pizza as "made fresh." After eating there, let me revise the ad with a little bit of truthfulness by adding two more words... "Made fresh...LAST MONTH!" Van's pizza apparently had been sitting in the delivery van for a few weeks – the crust was hard enough to hammer nails with. And pizza cheese shouldn't crunch. The salad bar was passable, but the age of Van's pizza made me wonder just how long the salad ingredients had been sitting around, too. After completing our archeological research to determine just how ancient Van's pizza was, we escaped the establishment, less than totally thrilled with Van's Pizza and its aged cuisine. Van's would proceed to be a running joke with us for the remainder of the trip. In fact, while passing Van's later in the evening and observing an employee moving pizza racks around inside after the establishment had closed, we surmised that the employee was returning the pizza to the refrigerator or broom closet to reheat the next day.

Having survived our Van's Pizza experience, we decided to procure some supplies to help us survive the next several days. We first attempted to go into one of several Food Lions, only to find that this particular one – normally open 24 hours – was closed while their floors were apparently being washed. This, too, became a running joke each time we passed this particular store in the next few days (i.e. – "I wonder if they finished cleaning their floors yet!"). We eventually did find a Food Lion (like Waffle Houses, these popped up every five miles or so). We obtained the necessities we would need to survive OBX – namely, munchies, soda, and beer – yes, supermarkets in North Carolina sell beer. We then proceeded back to our hotel rooms to celebrate the completion of our journey, and to rest for our next day's adventures.

## **DAY TWO: A BEACH, A WHARF AND A RIOT**

Though we were all fairly well spent from the long drive down to the Outer Banks the day before (especially Sparky), we all managed to eventually rise and shine and log that all-important beach time for the much anticipated and deserved R & R. Having learned my lesson about the importance of sunscreen the hard way in Florida the year before, I made sure I had plenty of sunscreen on this year. Too much in fact, as I learned once sand particles started to stick to me en masse. Lesson for next year - use spray on sunscreen!

After spending a good hour or so absorbing Sol's rays and letting the crashing ocean waves bathe my feet (no ocean creatures were harmed), I opted to do some oceanfront photography, taking pictures of flora and fauna, a collapsed beachfront home (brought down by a Nor'easter earlier in the year, according to a local), and one of the resident ghost crabs digging in the sand.

Eventually, all four of us went back to the hotel and spent some time enjoying the swimming pool, with a good aggressive session of water polo beanball breaking out. Soon, a sudden cloudburst sent us scrambling back inside to the hotel rooms, where we then plotted our big food run of the day – to a restaurant called The Wharf.

Sparky had told us about The Wharf on the way down, and we saw ads for this restaurant in several of the OBX travelogues. Every day The Wharf features an all-you-can-eat seafood buffet, beginning when the restaurant opens at 4 PM. Sparky had warned us, though, that we would need to arrive early, as lines formed outside the restaurant prior to opening, and waits of 30 minutes or more to get in were

commonplace.

Fortunately, our strategy worked - we arrived fairly early, and there wasn't any major line to get in this day, enabling us to be among the first in the door. The all-you-can-eat seafood buffet food spread was fabulous - shrimp, fish, scallops, crayfish, crabs, salad items, fries, hushpuppies, chicken wings, veggies, macaroni, dessert spread and more. We damn near died and went to heaven! We gorged unapologetically.

After putting a hurting on The Wharf's food supply, we proceeded to check out some of the shops in and around Nag's Head and Kitty Hawk. To my disappointment, nearly every clothing item with the OBX logo on it was obscenely overpriced. But we did manage to locate a few reasonably-priced souvenir T-shirts and other Outer Banks paraphernalia.

The weather through the course of our weekend at the Outer Banks was unsettled. For the most part, it could be sunny and warm one moment, with storm clouds, a downpour or rumble of thunder the next. While this didn't affect too many of the activities we had planned for our vacation weekend, it did disrupt plans for one event we wanted to take in...We had planned to take in the outdoor theatre live play about The Lost Colony at Roanoke Island, but rainy conditions at the time the play was scheduled to begin made us reconsider attending. A minor disappointment, but something we can check out if or when we make it back this way again.

Instead, we retired to the hotel rooms to catch a power nap before opting to explore the OBX night life. We studied the local entertainment guides and learned that there were a few nightspot venues around, running entertainment from deejays to karaoke to live bands. The name of one band caught our attention over the rest - Clowndog Riot, who were performing at the Cannon Club at the Carolinian Hotel in (Nag's Head).

Sparky, Mike D'Key and I arrived at the Cannon Club shortly after 11 PM. Finding a crowded parking lot and having to park on the other side of the highway, we anticipated having to maneuver our way around a crowded room. Not the case. Upon paying our cover and entering the establishment, we discovered the Cannon Club was fairly empty - it turns out most of the crowd was outside on the deck area overlooking the ocean. So we procured our first brews of the night (Dos Equis just \$2 a bottle, nice!) and secured a table near the stage to check out Clowndog Riot.

Before I talk about the band, a quick note about beer in North Carolina - the variety of brewski here in the OBX was a vast improvement over Florida from last year. These folks had actually heard of and stocked other beers besides the Budweiser family and Miller Lite. And the beer was reasonably priced too, comparable to beer prices here in central PA. In the beer department, North Carolina gets scoreboard over Florida!

Back to the band - we made a good choice this night, these guys kicked ass! From Arkansas, Clowndog Riot would be perfectly at home in stages around our area; they specialize in heavy modern rock and play it well. Rage Against The Machine, Creed, Pearl Jam, Kid Rock, Lit, a Korn medley, Tool, Limp Bizkit, Godsmack and more. Clowndog Riot also does original songs and has a CD available (see review elsewhere in this issue), and they ended the night with a song from that CD, "Tie Me Down." Singer Josh Newcom was an effective frontman, displaying equal parts singing voice and rage where deemed appropriate. Guitarists Brandon Gillihan and Blake Hall both were lethal with savage chops that attack like a herd of agitated razorbacks; and the rhythm battery of bassist Grant Hannah and drummer Robert Hannah pack a full-sounding thunder beneath it all.

Though the audience for Clowndog Riot was small in number, they were certainly not boring, at least one group seated at a table in a corner of the venue, not too far from where we were sitting. From what we could see, this was a family...of

REDNECKS! The dad - we'll call him Kuzzin Klem - was drunk off his ass! He would hoot and holler at the end of nearly every song, and yell out requests for tunes we figured this band probably wouldn't know. Fortunately, the band did know the songs and accommodated them, doing Steve Miller's "The Joker" and Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird." So elated was Kuzzin Klem after "The Joker" that he staggered up to the stage and tossed the band a whole \$1 tip! The band was so elated after completing "Free Bird" that they segued it directly into the Korn medley of "Blind" and "Freak On A Leash." By the way, this was a DYSFUNCTIONAL redneck family, as Kuzzin Klem and his wife - we'll call her Aunt Mom - started squabbling midway through the night, prompting the whole family to leave the venue. Cheap thrills in the OBX on a Saturday night...

We got to chat with Clowndog Riot after the show, and learned that this group was scheduled to perform at the world's largest nightclub, Club La Vela in Panama City Beach, Florida, the following week. The band also informed us they might be playing Pennsylvania sometime this winter. If they do make it up this way, I recommend checking them out, because Clowndog Riot delivers the goods!

Content that we had been soundly rocked on this Saturday night, we retired back to the hotel to rest and refuel at the midway point of our OBX sojourn.

## **DAY THREE: REAL PIZZA, A LIGHTHOUSE, THE BIRTHPLACE OF FLIGHT AND THE OBX SKINS GAME**

With our hotel only two blocks away from the beach, I had entertained the thought of trying to get up early during our stay in the Outer Banks and attempting to photograph the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean. But having not packed any sort of alarm clock, and having been out checking out Clowndog Riot the night before and not getting back until after 2 AM, it seemed very unlikely that I would ever be able to rise and shine before the sun to catch an ocean sunrise. Hell, it was a miracle for me to awaken before 6 AM any other time WITH an alarm clock, why would this time be any different?

Stranger things have happened.

On this Sunday morning, I just routinely woke up at around 5:25 AM. No alarm clock, no nightmares, not even any major need to use the bathroom at that moment. I just woke up. My eyes opened for a moment, and something registered in my head that there was a slight hint of light outside. I struggled to my feet, went to the window and opened the blind ever so slightly to answer my wish - the sun was still beneath the horizon. YES! On with my shorts, sneakers and T-shirt, and out the hotel to the beach to photograph a sunrise!

I stayed out there some 45 minutes to photograph the sunrise and enjoy the surroundings. I had the beach pretty much all to myself, only one other woman and her mother walked by while I was there. Me, my camera, the beach, the sunrise, a few seagulls, pelicans and other water birds. Life was good.

Satisfied that I had accomplished one of my goals for this vacation trip, I headed back to the hotel room and caught a few more hours of rest, before the other members of the vacation entourage and I officially rose to commence our vacation broadcast day.

We all were out of our respective sacks, showered and ready go by about 12 noon-ish. Obvious first order of the day...food! Our primary order of this day would eventually be to tour and climb the Currituck Beach Lighthouse near Corolla, North Carolina. En route there, though, we passed numerous restaurants and eateries, and we soon decided that we had recovered enough from our Van's Pizza experience two nights earlier to give another pizza place a try. We settled on Tomato Patch Pizzeria

in Corolla. I'm happy to report that this pizza place was considerably better, and the pizza very edible (and unfortunately, expensive). But it did the trick, and got our day off to an appetizing start.

Next, we headed to Currituck Beach Lighthouse. Unfortunately, our climb would have to wait a short while, as a nearby thunderstorm prompted the Lighthouse operators to bar anyone from climbing inside the lighthouse until after the storm had passed. To bide our time, Sparky drove us to a stretch of beach you could actually take vehicles on, where we rode along that stretch of beach for a few miles and back. Though it was a fun ride, the sand had a slippery texture much like deep snow, and anyone driving along the beach in this area had to be careful not to get off the main travel path, otherwise risk getting stuck in the sand. Sparky's Nissan Pathfinder could handle this thoroughfare well, but I would not want to take my Sentra onto it!

About half an hour later, we returned to the Currituck Beach Lighthouse, and with the storm moving further away, were shortly permitted to climb the inside of the lighthouse. We wound our way up the spiral staircase to the top, rapidly realizing along the way just how out of shape we were! Huffing and puffing, we eventually reached the top, and took in the wide view of the North Carolina shoreline. We then descended back to ground level; the trip down was a lot easier than the one up.

From the lighthouse, we then explored a few more of the shops in and around Corolla and Kill Devil Hills, before embarking to our next destination of the afternoon, the Wright Brothers Memorial in Kitty Hawk. First, we visited the National Park Service Wright Brothers historic site, but since it was late afternoon and closing in on 6 PM, we could only briefly check out this facility before it closed for the day. But we did get to check out the displays, including replicas of the legendary planes the Wright Brothers conquered flight with. Soon the ranger lady rushed us from the lot, instructing us where to park if we wanted to further check out the grounds. We parked in this new location, checked out a nearby airstrip with vintage planes and a few ultra- lite aircraft, and proceeded to the Wright Brothers Memorial. The Memorial itself sits atop the hill where the Wright Brothers took that historic first flight. We walked our way up the hill to the Memorial, and again realized just how out of shape we were.

At this point, with more storm clouds around the vicinity, we decided to retire to the hotel rooms briefly before seeking out our evening meal. Sparky remembered a restaurant where he had dined on a prior OBX journey, so we set out to relocate this establishment for our evening meal.

During the course of our search for the restaurant, we checked out another OBX landmark of sorts, the local pawn shop. The reason we went there wasn't to purchase anything, but to see the shop's famous resident, the cursing parrot. We saw the parrot, and though he wasn't in a particularly "nasty" mood this night, I thought I did hear the bird utter a Bronx cheer to a few laughing teenagers who came into the shop after us.

After a brief search, we located Sparky's restaurant – The Sticky Wicket Restaurant in Nags Head. We had to wait a little while for our food, but the wait was worth it, the meals were excellent! (Seafood and steaks were the preferred cuisine for our travel party this night.)

After the meal, time for some recreation. We headed to Professor Hacker's Lost Treasure Golf, a wild- looking miniature golf course in Kill Devil Hills. On our final evening in the Outer Banks, it was time for the Final Cut/OBX Skins Game! After the first five holes, I had taken an early four-stroke lead over Big Jim, including a hole-in-one on the fifth hole. But troubles on hole 9 put me just two strokes ahead of Big Jim on the leader board after ten holes. After 15 holes, Big Jim had pulled even with me, with Mike 3 strokes off the pace and Sparky – despite a hole-in-one on the fifteenth hole – 6 shots back. But the final three holes belonged to Mike, and were

disastrous for Big Jim, Sparky and myself. Final score: Mike won the Skins Game finishing 7 strokes over par, followed by Big Jim 8 strokes over, yours truly 9 strokes over, and Sparky 15 strokes over.

With Sparky and I despondent over our subpar golf performances, and Mike contemplating his PGA future after his Skins Game victory, we headed back to the beach to take out our frustrations on the local crab population. Armed with flashlight, we walked up to burrowing crabs and chased them back down into range of the ocean waves to wash them back out to sea. Cruel bastards! A few of the crabs were resilient and held their own, coming back for more. Those little critters can move fast when they have to! We actually contemplated the idea of capturing a few of them and bringing them back to Altoona, but we didn't have a case to put them in. Who wants a case of crabs anyway?

Our frustrations alleviated, we retired to our hotel rooms, to catch some shuteye before the final day of our Carolinian excursion.

## **DAY FOUR: THE RADIO AUCTION, THE VOICE OF AMERICA, AND GOOD SOUTHERN COOKING**

The main itinerary of this day would be a tour of the Voice of America transmitter facility near Greenville, North Carolina, which Sparky set up for 1 PM. To get there on time, we had to get up earlier this morning. Fortunately for me, for the second morning in a row, I rose before the sun, and was able to get out to the beach to photograph another sunrise and do some early morning shoreline wading. It was my last day there, so why not? After about 90 minutes experiencing ocean waves and sand through my toes, it was back to the hotel for breakfast and checking out of our rooms.

Among the amenities the Holiday Inn Express offered was a free breakfast buffet. As the four of us ate breakfast in the hotel lobby, we heard a young child several tables away raising a ruckus about leaving the hotel, yelling "I don't wanna go!!! I don't wanna go!!!" We chuckled over this, but then I warned the rest of the entourage that I would be the one doing the yelling in about 20 minutes – I didn't want to leave the Outer Banks, either!

But alas, we checked out of the hotel, and bid farewell to the Outer Banks. We checked out several landmarks as we ventured inland towards Greenville...One of the first was Mel's Diner near Jarvisburg, a diner that very much resembled the namesakes diner from the TV sitcom Alice. We shot a few obligatory pictures of it, before proceeding to our next stop, Grandy's Farm Market in nearby Grandy. Sparky had raved to us about the in-season peaches you could purchase here, so we both purchased bushel bags of peaches to take back home with us.

Our entertainment during the journey was on the radio. Local radio station WGAI in Elizabeth City, 560 AM, airs a radio auction program every weekday morning at 10 AM. It is hometown radio at its finest and funniest! The lady hosting the program would describe the various items up for bids, and the locals would call in to place bids. Items up for bidding included free pizzas from local businesses, video rentals, other stuff. Apparently some folks – getting the merchandise at low bids under what the stuff usually cost – were going to businesses that sponsored the program and taking advantage of them, prompting the radio auction host to warn listeners not to "Take advantage of our sponsors...We want to keep those folks on the AIR!" Every time a winning bid was announced, the prize item was "Out da door!" Every time the show would cut away for a commercial break, we would hear the obnoxious theme music for the program, a piece by Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass. The host sounded like she had her own legion of locals calling in, from elderly folks to

housewives to other assorted local yocals. According to Sparky, you can actually stream audio from WGAI.

As we proceeded inland towards Greenville, the sun gave way to clouds and several drenching downpours. We made good time regardless, and arrived at the Voice Of America site at 12:30, a full half hour before we were scheduled to be there.

For you readers not versed in shortwave, the Voice Of America is our government's shortwave radio voice to the world. The VOA broadcasts news, sports, commentary, travelogues and other programs about America to the world from its studios in Washington, D.C. The Voice Of America has transmitter sites throughout the world; the Greenville site is its biggest transmitting facility here in the U.S.

After a brief wait, our tour guide showed up and proceeded to give us a tour of the whole VOA transmitting facility. He took us into the brain center, where transmissions from the site are monitored and where the broadcast signal is sent to the transmitting towers. One of the more fascinating aspects of this tour for me was that while a lot of the brain center that coordinates the transmissions is computerized and state-of-the-art, the actual transmitting equipment itself dates back to the 1940's and 1950's, and that 'primitive' vacuum tube technology is still the most reliable for packing the power to VOA's transmitters. We were able to look at the transmitting equipment and various support systems, and then go into the watchtower to view the whole field of transmitting towers.

A shortwave radio listener myself, I was fascinated by the whole tour - thanks to Sparky for setting it up for us!

After leaving the VOA, it was time to seek out a meal. Wheelman Sparky asked us if we wanted to experience a real Southern diner...always up for a new and exciting experience, we said yes. Sparky proceeded to drive us into the downtown of Williamston, North Carolina, to R & C's Diner. True to Sparky's billing, R & C's was the picture image of what you might visualize when you think of the words 'southern diner.' It was a small 'greasy spoon'-type diner where the food is cooked right on the spot, and local residents come in throughout the day to catch a reliable meal. The clincher was the menu, though, which featured such Southern favorites as grits, collards, and corn bread. It was good food that didn't wound us in the wallet too much - always a good thing. Upon checking out, the ladies at the cash register detected that we weren't from their locale, and we told them we were passing through town. Once outside, I decided to take a photo of the diner. Upon spotting my camera, the ladies at the register were laughing and waving out the window to have their picture taken. Considering how routine their day-to-day duties at the diner must be, it must have been a nice surprise to actually have somebody take notice of them and their diner.

From the diner, we headed back on the road, and proceeded to visit Sparky's friend, recording engineer Ted Etheridge, and check out Ted's studio, Music Box Recording Studio near Williamston. For regular Final Cut readers, yes, this is the famous studio where Mark Da Boy recorded those legendary smash Mark Allen Project albums Footnotes and Whew! Ted gave us a tour of his state-of-the-art studio, and played music from some of the artists who have recorded there, including pop singers, R&B, country, gospel and rock artists from east-central North Carolina and Virginia. I was expecting to see a huge picture of Mark Da Boy on the wall, but I guess Ted didn't want a mad rush of musicians eager to record their music where the MAP did its legendary work. At least I can say I sat in the studio where "Just Get Busy" was mastered...WOW!

Alas, all good things must come to an end, and it was finally time for the vacation entourage to begin its lengthy drive homeward. We headed northwestward towards

I-95, traversing tranquil and picturesque small towns along the way.

Before I went on this trip, my older brother asked me to bring something back from a Piggly Wiggly supermarket. Through the course of the journey, we saw plenty of Food Lions, but no Piggly Wiggly's. Just as I had pretty much given up hope on being able to grant my brother's request, we discovered a Piggly Wiggly as we got ready to exit onto I-95 near Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. Elated, I rushed into the store and bought a package of Piggly Wiggly cookies and a jar of Piggly Wiggly peanut butter. And local residents were probably wondering who the lunatic was in the parking lot, taking a picture of a Piggly Wiggly supermarket...

We then exited onto I-95 northward and continued the trek home. Sparky pointed out other landmarks to us as we headed towards Richmond, including a huge Marlboro cigarette (apparently signifying a location where Marlboros are manufactured). We headed through the congestion of the Richmond citiplex, and continued north to Warrenton, where we got off on Route 17 and continued north. We arrived in Winchester at around 10:30, and decided to eat our final meal of the journey. The eatery of choice - you guessed it - Waffle House. One final vestige of the South before we headed back across the West Virginia and Pennsylvania state borders towards home.

It was a fun and relaxing four days, just what the doctor ordered (hell, no doctor gave me the order, it was just what I ordered!). I thoroughly enjoyed the Outer Banks with the best of both worlds – spread out enough that you never felt crowded, yet busy enough that you didn't get bored either. And while the drive to and from takes about eight hours, OBX is not so far away that you can't organize a long weekend vacation trip there and back, like we did. My first journey to OBX was an enjoyable one, and I get the feeling it won't be my last.



**Voice of America transmitter facility near Greenville, NC.**



Music Box Studio near Hamilton, NC. Mark "Da Boy" recorded here.



Sparky and Big Jim at Waffle House in Winchester, VA; the last photo of the trip.

# FREAKER'S BALL, NEAR CLARKSBURG, PA 7/15

Even though I've attended numerous major-name concerts over the past several years, I think there's still nothing like the good ol' tried-and-true backwoods kegger.

Okay, Freaker's Ball isn't really a kegger; it's a little more organized than that, and they don't supply the keg - you bring your own beverages. But the premise is similar. A bunch of bands, musicians and fans assemble in a cornfield on private land, out in backsticks Indiana County where they won't bother anybody and vice-versa, and enjoy life, love, music, beer and more for two days and one night. The festivities begin on Saturday afternoon, with bands playing well into the night. Bands and fans then sleep/camp over into Sunday morning (with the road entering the property gated shut to prevent possible DUI's from leaving the venue), and a "hangover jam" takes place the next day as revelers recover and commence their journeys back home.

I missed attending the first Freaker's Ball two years ago (to attend a similar fest closer to home, "Nutapalooza" in Bellwood). But main Freaker's Ball spokesperson/ambassador Tony Mollick furnished me with a commemorative tape of the event, "The Freakin' Video." This whet my appetite to attend last year's event. (I enjoyed the bands and show, but hated the morning after and the many thorns I had to remove from my skin and clothing - ouch!).

This year presented a different circumstance. Both Freaker's Ball and OzzFest's Pittsburgh visit occurred on the same weekend. And Schtiv D'Ump and I had already planned to catch OzzFest before the dates for Freaker's Ball had been announced. I wanted to attend both, but didn't relish the ideas of either trying to drive from-Altoona-to-Freaker's-back-to-Altoona-to-OzzFest-and- back-to-Altoona, or the prospect of trying to go to Pittsburgh and Ozzfest directly from Freaker's Ball that Sunday morning. Fortunately, another factor figured in - Big Jim's band, Penetrator, was one of the bands playing at Freaker's Ball on Saturday, and Jim had tickets to attend OzzFest on Sunday. So the game plan was formulated: I would ride over to Freaker's Ball with Big Jim, with Schtiv catching up to us there; and then we would all room over at a Pittsburgh hotel, get up the next morning and ride down the road to OzzFest.

Everything went almost according to plan, except that Schtiv had to bypass Freaker's Ball due to sudden car problems (he caught up with us at OzzFest). So Big Jim, additional guest freak Guv'nor Jesse and I braved threatening skies and forecasts for rain and made our way to Freaker's Ball. Guv'nor Jesse also served as guest statistician, doing calculations on Big Jim's car speed, trajectories and estimated times of arrival at our destination. (Jesse calculated that Big Jim's average speed was several gilliquads over the speed limit.)

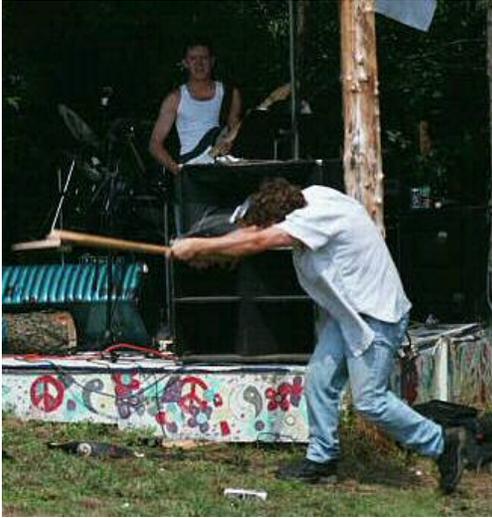


**Hillside camping at the Freaker's Ball.**

We managed to stay on the mud-slickened road back to the venue, avoiding sliding off into ravines and volcano beds. We arrived at Freaker's Ball relatively early in the afternoon, and in the midst of the first band of the afternoon, LZ Lay. After momentarily checking in at the campsite of Big Jim's Penetrator bandmate, Mickey Luckenbaugh, we made our way past other campsite and tailgate revelers to the main stage to see what LZ Lay was up to. The trio – singer/guitarist Brian DeHaas, bassist/singer Chris Owak, and drummer Louie Goldenson – were storming through their set of Southern/classic rock, punk and originals, crunching out ZZ Top's "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide" as the three of us took in the environs. The group then fired off crisp numbers from Neil Young and Lynyrd Skynyrd, and kept the forward momentum going through several more numbers. This trio was tight and energetic, and had the incoming Freaker's crowd yelling more and more approval after each song. Eventually, LZ Lay reached their crescendo during the last two tunes; their version of AC/DC's "Rock and Roll Singer" heightened the energy level for the closer version of "Voodoo Chile," where Chris provided the first wild highlight of Freaker's Ball – trashing his bass against the wooden stump holding up the stage. As ragged as the Freaker's stage looked, though, we were hoping Chris didn't weaken the stage enough for it to collapse during another band's set later on! With the sacrificed bottom end instrument laying in pieces at stagefront, the crowd responded with a wild round of cheers, and show host Tony Mollick looked on with a smile, content with the first act of freakdom at this year's Freaker's Ball.



**LZ Lay kicks off the music at Freaker's Ball.**



**LZ Lay's Chris Owak sacrifices his bass to the rock gods.**

Freaker's Ball was more than just the music. It was the people, the camping, the food, the camaraderie and the celebration of togetherness and music. In between bands, Tony and I toured the Freaker's grounds, videotaping interview segments with various attendees of this year's event, possibly for inclusion in "The Freakin' Video, Vol. 2" (I assume Tony didn't do one last year).

Soon it was Penetrator's turn. Big Jim on rhythm guitar and vocals; Jeff Renner on lead vocals, Chloroseptic and guitar; Phil Kolarczyk on bass and Mickey Luckenbaugh on drums performed a mix of current and classic rock, opening with Creed's "Higher," and proceeding with tunes from AC/DC, 3 Doors Down, Matchbox 20, Ted Nugent, Lit, Eric Clapton, Blink 182, Pink Floyd and more. It didn't take too long before Penetrator had several of their fans dancing on the stagefront grass, plus a few costumed freaks dancing around the bonfire. (A freak costume contest was part of this year's Freaker's Ball proceedings.) Jeff was the focal point of Penetrator's presentation, doing the lion's share of vocal work and flashing guitar highlights throughout the set. Using a cordless microphone, Jeff had some trouble with the mic this set, but still did convincing work, especially on the guitar front. Penetrator saved its best for the last song, Peter Frampton's "Do You Feel Like We Do," highlighted by Jeff's guitar talkbox display. In all, Penetrator turned in a solid performance at Freaker's Ball despite Jeff's technical difficulties, and this still relatively new band took another step forward.



**Penetrator penetrates the Freaker's Ball.**

During Penetrator's set, Guv'nor Jesse and I noted dark clouds on the surrounding horizon, and with rain prominent in the day's forecast, a drizzle began falling as Penetrator broke down their gear and the day's next band, Sweettooth, set up. We accompanied Big Jim as he transported gear back to his car, and as we made our way back towards the stage, we took refuge from the steady drizzle under the tent of members of the band Angry Trout, who would perform later. I had met bassist Dan Kastronis a few weeks prior when he and several other Freaker's Ball performers appeared on Q94's "Backyard Rocker." We sipped brews and talked music until the rain left up enough to allow us to head back down to the stage area to view Sweettooth, who was getting started.

While LZ Lay and Penetrator performed mostly cover songs, Sweettooth performed all original material. Singer Frank Gianelli, guitarist Scott Passaro, keyboard player Dennis Cook, bassist Mike Rominski and drummer Louie Goldenson (making his second appearance of the afternoon, he also drummed with LZ Lay) had been rehearsing this project for the past two years, and were just now starting to bring it out to the outside world. The sound was funky, hard-edged rock circa Red Hot Chili Peppers, but with their own original slant to it. Frank sang his vocals with a soulful rasp, while Scott chimed in with stinging fluid lead guitarwork through the course of Sweettooth's set. As Sweettooth was doing all original songs, I didn't catch much in the way of song titles. But Sweettooth's songs were all fairly strong tracks, and judging by this set, I would be interested in hearing any recorded projects this band might have in their future.



**Sweettooth funkng it up at Freaker's Ball.**

The rain had cleared out during Sweettooth's set, and the smallish thunderstorm moved off and away from Freaker's Ball. The sun was starting to set during the set break, and more costumed freaks began to thow their wares in the costume contest, including a grim reaper and a bearded lady in a business suit. Mostly all of the attendees had arrived at the Freaker's grounds and had set up their respective campsites, tents, or overnight accommodations on the grounds, and a few barbecue grills were firing up as darkness descended. Soon the next band was up, Driven. Like Sweettooth before them, Driven also performed all original songs. But unlike Sweettooth, Driven's sound was rooted in heavy modern/power metal. I didn't catch the names of the band members here, but these guys pounded, with aggressive beats and riffs and an early Metallica slant. Driven generated momentum with original songs such as "Unforgotten," "Time" "911," "Killing Spree," "Plunge" and more. The only interruption in Driven's set happened when they tried to implement an effect during one song onstage, which caused a malfunction with a piece of gear and a lengthy break. But overall, I was impressed with what I witnessed from Driven, and hope to see this group again at some point.



**Driven steps up the musical aggression at Freaker's Ball.**

After Driven's set, Big Jim, Guv'nor Jesse and I walked up to the Luckenbaugh campsite to munch down a few burgers and dogs, before returning to the stage area for show organizer Tony Mollick and the reunited Groove Junkies. A slight drizzle returned to the area during the set break, but had lessened enough by the time the Groove Junkies were underway that we could venture down to the stage without getting too soggy.

Back together after nearly a year and a half apart, the Groove Junkies delivered – as expected – a set of well-played classic rock and original songs, including tunes from their CD *It Ain't Pretty*. Tony on lead vocals and guitar, guitarist Brian Blake, keyboard player/singer Ryan O'Neill, bassist Mark Popovich and drummer David Blake kept the stagefront crowd of freaks happy with their version of "Got My Mojo Workin'," the Allmans' "Whipping Post," ZZ Top's "Fool For Your Stockings," the crowd-pleaser "Justice" with its "Iko Iko" midsection and much more. Tony's voice and guitar talents shined as expected, and Ryan O'Neill put in an exceptional job on keyboards, providing a lot of flare and finesse. From the majority of the set we stuck around to observe, the Groove Junkies did a fine job.



**The Groove Junkies at the Freaker's Ball.**



**The Grim Reaper makes a cameo appearance at Freaker's Ball.**

But we had a hotel room waiting for us in Pittsburgh, and a full day of OzzFest the next day, so we decided to leave Freaker's Ball for Pittsburgh towards the end of the Groove Junkies' set. We carefully stepped our way up the muddy road towards Big Jim's car, now parked outside the gate. And with muddy conditions as they were,

this road was as tricky to maneuver on foot as it was in a vehicle! We would later learn that, even though we saw no hint of them on the premises before we left, Felix & the Hurricanes did eventually arrive and performed an excellent set to close the evening at Freaker's Ball; and the following day, Tony Mollick and Bobby Lee teamed as "Double Trouble," performing as equipment was removed from the stage around them, until only Bobby remained with minimal sound gear.

Both Tony Mollick and I agreed that this year's Freaker's Ball was the best yet. And as Tony proclaimed that he would continue to organize this event annually until the day he died, I proclaimed as long as he stages this event, I will be there to be a part of it. And based on this year, and the good vibes and music supplied, I recommend making Freaker's Ball a part of your summer schedule in 2001 and beyond.

## **OZZFEST 2000 @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN 7/16/00**

Unlike past years, we didn't have to worry about a long drive to get to this year's OzzFest – no worries about Parkway gridlock or getting a late start. After the Freaker's Ball, Big Jim, Guv'nor Jesse and I stayed over at the Comfort Inn in Oakdale, just 8 miles east of Burgettstown and Star Lake Amphitheatre. After a restful night, we would get a reasonable start and arrive fairly early at this year's OzzFest event.

Or so we thought...As we approached the Burgettstown exit of Route 22, we found the traffic leading into the venue to be backed up. We wound up waiting some 30 to 45 minutes at least to get into Star Lake, but still arrived fairly early in the course of the OzzFest event.

As you may recall from the Freaker's Ball recap above, Schtiv D'Ump was to meet up with us at OzzFest. With the massive crowd already there, we figured it would be like finding a needle in a haystack trying to hook up with D'Ump. But as luck would have it, Schtiv and Pellegrine's kitchen man Donnie "The Crumster" Crum pulled in almost directly behind our car in the Star Lake parking lot.

As Big Jim needed to rendezvous with Shawn "Mr. Frankstown" Dougherty and his party contingent, he went ahead inside the Star Lake. The rest of us remained in the Star Lake parking lot for a little while to relax and down a few cold ones before entering the crowded venue for OzzFest.

The Star Lake parking lot during OzzFest can be almost as entertaining as the concert event itself. We got to observe molared rock fans stagger through the parking lot after ingesting the poison (or poisons) of their choice; and we also were able to bear witness to one of the topless female duels in the parking lot, as two women stepped on the roofs of nearby cars and - to the cheers of demanding drunken male fans – showed what they had...or didn't have. Unfortunately for us,

while the lady on the car nearest to us was "endowed," her beer gut was even more endowed...ugh.



**The OzzFest entourage: D'Scribe, Schtiv D'Ump, Donnie "the Crumster" and Guv'nor Jesse.**



**Cheap thrills in the Star Lake parking lot.**

A thunderstorm also formed over our section of the Star Lake parking lot, providing a few thrills as several lightning bolts zapped nearby hillsides to the cheers of the parking lot crowd. A brief downpour also ensued with this storm, which set the stage for several things that happened later on during OzzFest.

Eventually, we did head inside Post Gazette Pavilion at Star Lake to witness this year's inception of OzzFest. We progressed to our predesignated rendezvous point between the lawn and main stagefront area to observe Incubus. I wasn't all that familiar with Incubus, but we had listened to the group's 1999 CD, *Save Yourself*, en route to Freaker's Ball and the Star Lake, and a few songs were recognizable, such as the opener "Privilege," "Nowhere Fast" and the radio track "Pardon Me." Incubus sounded respectable on their set of heavy rap-edged modern metal; but didn't provide such a knockout set that I would want to shell out any major cash to see them again.

During the main stage changeover between bands, we rapidly made our way to the second stage at the rear of Star Lake to catch Kittie's set. However, we found the earlier downpour, combined with the thousands of OzzFest revelers, had made much of the Star Lake grounds between the two stages a veritable mudfest. I learned this the hard way by slipping and falling en route to the second stage, coating my whole left side (and my brand new Freaker's Ball tie-dye T-shirt purchased the day before)

in mud. (Fortunately, this appeared to be a spot that hadn't been puked in yet, something that became more prevalent as the day wore on).

We arrived in time to catch most of Kittie's set, and my first impressions were good. These four teenage headbanging ladies from Canada attacked their instruments and music with the ferocity of wildcats, quickly stirring up the stagefront moshpit and inspiring body surfing en masse. No Spice Girls/Britney Spears niceties and charm here, these women were out for blood! In fact, Kittie's lead singer at one point loudly proclaimed, "This ain't no f#%&in' Spice Girls concert!" As with Incubus, I wasn't familiar enough with Kittie's song material to be able to rattle off the songs I heard them do, but suffice it to say that their performance was hot and heavy enough to make me consider a possible investment in their debut CD at some point.

As it turned out, Kittie was the only band I got to witness on the OzzFest second stage this year, due to my desire not to miss the strong line-up on the OzzFest Main Stage, and my desire not to have another slip-and-fall mudbath en route. As it soon turned out, though, I would not escape the wrath of mud – nor would many others.

En route back to the Main Stage area, we stopped for our only food pit stop of OzzFest, carefully selecting only one or two menu items from the Star Lake's badly-overpriced cuisine, and procuring a brew to wash it down with. We thought about retreating back to the second stage to catch Soulfly, but decided instead to head back to the Main Stage.

We made our way back to the Main Stage area to view Static X. As expected, Static X delivered an agitated set of breakneck cyber/dance metal, including many of the songs from their Wisconsin Death Trip CD such as the popular "Push It," "Bled For Days" and "I'm With Stupid." As a unit, Static X played their set airtight with few breaks in the action, and their fire and intensity had several moshpits brewing in the lawn seating area. And with the rain-soaked lawn area disintegrating into turf and mud with the moshpit outbreaks, the projectile of choice for this year's OzzFest quickly became apparent, as lawn area participants started showering the pavilion seating area with muddy clumps of turf. The rain of turf started on the far side away from us, but steadily progressed across the Star Lake grounds like a football stadium "wave." And as turf rained into the pavilion seating area, those seated in the pavilions returned fire, and the OzzFest turf wars were literally on! At this point, our OzzFest entourage was at the far left edge of the walkway between lawn and pavilion area, so we escaped any direct hits from flying turf at this early point in time. But as Big Jim, Schtiv and I had tickets for pavilion seating, we were aware we might have to enter the line of fire as the day progressed.

We stayed at our location during set break to observe the flying turf wars and to await the next band on the Main Stage, Godsmack. I had seen Godsmack at least three times in the past year, and their opening slots on last year's OzzFest tour and subsequent Black Sabbath concert tour helped springboard the group to their runaway success. I was anxious to see how Godsmack's show progressed from the last time I had seen them.

Godsmack didn't disappoint. The group went for the jugular early, launching their set with their breakthrough song "Whatever," and blazing through a hard-hitting set of tunes from their debut CD, and new tunes from their forthcoming second disc. Quickly Star Lake was raining turf again, as frontman Sully and Godsmack rumbled

through favorites like "Bad Religion," "Moon Baby," and "Get Up, Get Out!," where Sully and drummer Tommy combined in a percussion duet. Sully tried to rally the OzzFest crowd to fire up the moshpits, warning that Phil Anselmo and Pantera would be pissed off if the pits didn't get more active later on. Godsmack finished their set with the hits "Voodoo" and "Keep Away." This was the most fired-up set I've observed from Godsmack so far, and with the new album arriving shortly, this band's star should continue to rise.

During the set break, Big Jim and I made our way to our respective pavilion seats (Schtiv would join us later). I could see a few spots where direct turf hits were scored, and every so often an incoming turf missile would land a few rows behind me. I was far enough in that the brunt of the turf projectiles were landing behind me, but I still had to be wary in case somebody had a particularly good arm.

Soon Pantera took the stage. After hearing lots of legendary eyewitness accounts of this band's live show, I would finally get to see Anselmo and co. for myself. Touring their new CD Reinventing the Steel, Pantera showcased several tracks from that album, opening with "Yesterday Don't Mean Sh\*\*," and also doing "Hellbound," the radio track "Goddamn Electric," and "Revolution is My Name." Incensed over the lack of moshpits over the Star Lake environs, Phil demanded to see 15 moshpits erupt (I think four was the maximum we would see). Pantera scattered in favorites like "Walk," "Becoming" from Far Beyond Driven, and "This Love" from Vulgar Display of Power. Phil Anselmo then acknowledged Ozzy Osbourne by declaring that if the audience thought Pantera were the 'kings of metal,' "the MESSIAH is next." Pantera then finished their set with two tracks from Cowboys From Hell, "Primal Concrete Sledge" and the title song. The new material from Reinventing the Steel fit in comfortably with the established Pantera classics. Phil and Pantera sounded suitably dark and sinister this set; Phil sounded especially low key and quietly evil. But when push came to shove, as expected, this band throttled on all cylinders, with Vinnie Paul's drums and Rex Brown's bass setting the quaking rumble for Dimebag Darrell's flesh-ripping chords and Phil's raging words. For my first look at Pantera, this set delivered what I expected, although I still want to see this band as headliners sometime to see what the full show is about.

The turf wars continued through it all, with incoming and outgoing salvos hitting every several seconds or so. Though I never took a direct hit, I did take a secondary hit from one turf salvo that deflected off a nearby chair. Most people tried to ignore it as best they could, although I did see one victim of a direct hit - with the help of his friend spotting and directing him from the pavilion - locate the offender who threw the projectile and "have a friendly talk" with him. On a more serious note, I did see one guy escorting his injured girlfriend, who took an apparent direct hit near an eye. Star Lake security was trying to reprimand offenders caught in the act, but their efforts were largely in vain.

During set break between Pantera and Ozzy Osbourne, Schtiv made way to his seat next to mine. To his left, another crew of revelers took up positions in their seats, and the Pavilion area saw its biggest influx of crowd for the day.

As has been customary over the past several Ozzy tours and OzzFests, Ozzy Osbourne's set was introduced with an updated cartoon video showing Ozzy and his latest film parody exploits. Past Ozzy film parodies had his Ozzness catching Alanis Morissette's underwear in the back seat of her convertible; knocking on the door of

the lunar space capsule in Apollo 13, and appearing in a Spice Girls video. This year's video montage featured Ozzy as one of the combatants in the film *Gladiator*; Ozzy thinking evil thoughts in a Britney Spears video; Ozzy giving Regis Philbin due justice as a contestant in *Millionaire*; Ozzy "shagging her rotten" as Austin Powers; and Ozzy yelling "WHAZZUPPP!!!!???" in one of those phone commercials. As usual, a hilarious way to introduce Ozzy's headlining set.

Ozzy and band then proceeded with their set, opening with "I Don't Know," and continuing with some of his Ozzness' best-known work, both solo and with Black Sabbath. "Believer," "War Pigs," "Mr. Crowley," before slowing down for "Mama I'm Coming Home," during which a sea of cigarette lighters illuminated the Star Lake grounds. At least every other song or two, sprayers from atop the stage would send a deluge of water down upon the stagefront audience. During "No More Tears," Ozzy mooned the audience. Ozzy then introduced his band this night; guitarist Joe Holmes, drummer (Brian Tichy), bassist Robert Turillo and keyboard player John Sinclair. He and band then proceeded with "Suicide Solution," which concluded by showcasing the band through a short medley of Ozzy and Sabbath classics. "Change The World" stepped up the tempo, before "Crazy Train" concluded Ozzy's set with another huge deluge of water from atop the stage. Obviously the OzzFest crowd wanted more, so Ozzy and company answered the wild cheers with the encore version of "Paranoid" to end their set and this year's OzzFest.

Fortunately, as darkness set in, the turf projectile wars appeared to subside. But as Schtiv would learn the hard way, another problem emerged. As everybody stood up on their seats in the pavilion area to better see the stage, we learned that the crew next to us – and especially the guy adjacent to Schtiv – weren't especially adept at standing upon their chairs. The guy next to Schtiv especially would lose his balance frequently, and several times careened into Schtiv, making him fall off his chair. At least once the drunk triggered the domino effect, careening into Schtiv, who in turn careened into me and sent us all toppling into the aisle. Fortunately, Schtiv kept his composure and resisted the urge to slug the idiot; but a few tense moments did ensue.

As has been the case the past 2-3 times I have seen him perform, Ozzy Osbourne was in good form this night at OzzFest. His voice held out pretty well, and the Phil Anselmo-christened "messiah of metal" still knew how to maneuver the stage and whip the audience into a frenzy just when they might be tempted to relax and slack off. Though he again reportedly said this would be his final appearance in OzzFest and that he would not be a part of next year's show, Ozzy Osbourne looked like he could keep doing live performances like this for another 20 years, judging by his energized presence this night.

OzzFest was over for this year, but the entertainment at Star Lake was not. As we made our way along the sidewalks to leave Star Lake, we observed many revelers attempting to ascend through the Star Lake lawn area. But now largely grass- and turf-depleted, the front portion of the lawn area was solid mud, and we noticed quite a few people lose traction attempting to work their way up hill, slipping and sliding in the mud and muck, and like a car spinning tires in this type of condition, throwing mud back upon the people behind them trying to make their way up the hill. Out of the three OzzFests I have been a part of thus far, this was by far the messiest.

# ROLLING ROCK TOWN FAIR

## WESTMORELAND COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS NEAR LATROBE, PA 8/5/00



**When word first surfaced about the Rolling Rock Town Fair** , I didn't give it much thought. Another concert, with several bands I wasn't all that excited about driving to Latrobe to go see.

But as time progressed, I started hearing more and more about this concert...and the controversy surrounding it. It was going to be an all-day rock fest at the Westmoreland County Fairgrounds, and the townspeople in the vicinity were none too happy about it. Crowd expectations of 30,000 to 40,000 people, fears of major parking nightmares, plus thoughts of the last such fest the Red Hot Chili Peppers headlined - the riot- and violence-marred Woodstock – prompted townspeople and area officials to try to get the concert cancelled. A lawsuit was even planned to try to stop the concert, but time ran short and the effort couldn't be organized in time.

I still hadn't really planned on attending the Town Fair, and the concert eventually sold out, but fortunately for me, Big Jim had an unclaimed ticket, so I was in. I would get to experience the Rolling Rock Town Fair, whether it would turn out to be a good time, a spectacle, or both.

According to directions that came with the tickets, ticketholders would be able to park on the grounds for free. But as our entourage arrived in the vicinity that morning, we saw numerous property owners charging \$10, \$15, \$20 and even \$25 for concertgoers to park on their lawns, and a lot of people shelling out the loot to do so. I started wondering if the concert ground free parking lots were already filled up to capacity, forcing folks to have to pay to park. We were soon relieved to learn that no, the promised free parking lots were nowhere near full, and we were quickly guided into a space within sight of the entrance gate. (With the free parking for folks who already held tickets, we assumed the folks who paid to park either didn't yet have tickets, or feared not being able to find a space closer to the venue.)

After a short walk, we entered the Rolling Rock Town Fair Grounds, where a sizable crowd of concertgoers had already amassed. With two stages of bands performing, the second stage was already underway with the Stepkings. We opted to bypass the Stepkings to get better acclimated with our surroundings. We checked out a few booths, and passed the food, drink and bathroom lines (already long even though it was barely noon). Big Jim and I then proceeded to the main stage concert area, in the hopes of seeing the first band there, Marcy Playground. We learned they had already performed, and that we missed them. (Apparently, no big loss – the group

bypassed playing their big hit "Sex and Candy," and instead did just music from their second album.)

But one of the bands I had most anticipated seeing at this concert, Our Lady Peace, was introduced, so we made our way onto the main stagefront area to watch them. I had seen this band at Crowbar in State College a couple of years ago and liked them, and wanted to see how their new material played out live. It was a bit of a chore getting through the narrow access gate to get to the main stagefront area, but nothing compared to how difficult this area would be to get to later on. Our Lady Peace mixed new and old song material, including their two best-known hits, "Superman's Dead" and "Clumsy." The group did a workmanlike job on their set, and the crowd seemed to be largely into their music. But having seen them at Crowbar, I knew something was missing – the visuals. Our Lady Peace used video screen imagery and set backdrops to great effect at that Crowbar show, and in a support band capacity here at the Town Fair, the group didn't have onstage visuals at their disposal. So while Our Lady Peace delivered a good set, there was nothing truly special or remarkable about it. I prefer seeing this band as headliners, when they can put the visual side of their show to use.

As it had been somewhat difficult to get to the main stagefront area, we decided to hang around after Our Lady Peace's set and catch Fuel, who was up shortly. We looked around this area. It had been advertised that free water would be available to concertgoers, and this was supplied in the main stagefront area with a series of water tanks with paper cone dispensers lining the right-hand side. Thirsty concertgoers could help themselves to the water at any point during the day. However, as more and more people obtained water through the course of the day, the areas surrounding each water tank became muddy and messy.

While Fuel was setting up on the mainstage, Fern was performing on the second stage, and audio from the second stage was being played through the mainstage sound system. With the din of the large crowd making details of Fern's set hard to hear, it was difficult to hear everything that was going on during Fern's set. But the group sounded competent enough, and ended their set with a crowd singalong tune, I believe called "We Wanna Rock and Roll," which had the crowd at both stages cheering approval.

The crowd had thinned a little immediately after Our Lady Peace's set, and many onlookers ventured back into the concession area and second stage. Big Jim and I took the opportunity to situate ourselves closer to the front and center of the stage. Along the way, near the soundboard, we witnessed our first vomiting casualty of the day, a young lady who apparently couldn't hold her Mountain Dew. Lightweight! And this was before 1 PM – we could only imagine what horrors awaited us as the afternoon progressed and the crowd swelled. More fans arrived for Fuel's set, and the stagefront crowd grew rapidly as the time drew nearer for the band to commence their set.

Fuel wasted no time getting right down to business, launching their set with the explosive "Jesus Or A Gun," and it didn't take long for the moshpit to fire up – mere feet away from Big Jim and me. Boom-mounted video cameras swept above the crowd, panning across the moshpit frenzy, and instigating massive waves and cheers wherever the camera pointed during the sweep. We both gave our best waves and screamed at the top of our lungs, too, hoping to get our mugs on national television.

Fuel mixed songs from their Sunburn album and forthcoming follow-up disc *Something Like Human*, expected out in September. We heard "Last Time" from the new disc, "Bittersweet" from Sunburn, and "Hemorrhage," the first single from the new album. "Shimmer" re-triggered the moshpit, and we looked on in amusement as one large guy thought he had won the moshpit "king of the hill" contest, only to be tripped up by a smaller mosher taking out his knees from behind. After another song or two, Fuel ended their set with the rapidfire "Ozone" off Sunburn, guaranteeing the stagefront moshpit ended in a blaze of glory. Fuel was definitely happy to be at Rolling Rock Town Fair, and the group made the most of it, playing a tight high-energy set with very few pauses along the way. And at least based on the songs they played in this set, the new album should be killer.

At this point, Big Jim and I decided to exit the main stagefront area to explore what else was going on at the Town Fair. To exit the stagefront area, concertgoers had to go through a small gate on the other side of the soundboard area, opposite the side where they first came in. With the mass of humanity attempting to leave the area, the scene was similar to cattle being driven through the gates of a corral. In fact, several sarcastic fans moored like cattle as they moved through the gates.

It took some 15-20 minutes just to get through the gate and head back up the hillside to the concession area, but we did eventually make it. Slightly fatigued from the battle up through the crowded hillside, we decided to bypass Reveille on the second stage in lieu of getting something to eat and drink, but we had to face harsh reality – long lines at nearly every concession stand. This would be one of the big complaints about the Town Fair, the long lines to get to anything, from food to drinks to souvenirs. 35,000 music fans congested into a fairground-sized concert area would tend to do this, I guess. Big Jim and I used some strategy, and picked the smallest line, in front of an Italian sausage sandwich stand. It took about ten minutes of waiting, but we got our sandwiches, and maneuvered to find a rare uncongested spot to stand and enjoy our meal. And unlike concert venues like Star Lake and Hershey, food and drink prices were actually reasonable here. After completing our sandwiches, we endured a longer line and wait to obtain snowcones to cool ourselves in the hot sun. And then we made our way to the bleacher stands overlooking the mainstage area to catch some of Moby's set.

In all honesty, I am no fan of Moby and his electronic dance music. That vein of computerized dancebeat stuff never connected with me. But judging by the massive size of the stagefront crowd now assembled before Moby, *SOMEBODY* must like this guy and his tunes. And as Jim and I watched Moby's set progressed, I decided that though I'm not a fan of the man's music, Moby himself is an entertaining personality. Before launching into his tune "Hope," in this election year, Moby launched into a tirade against the Republican Party and urged the crowd not to vote Republican, to the cheers of many in the audience. At several points, Moby addressed those who didn't enjoy his dancebeat music, relegating most to being jocks and rednecks. After several more songs, the highlight of the set which won my respect for the guy even if I didn't particularly like his music...After introducing a song called "Body Rock," a fan from the stagefront audience leaped onstage and started breakdancing in front of Moby and his band. Almost instantly, a security guard grabbed the breakdancer and pulled him off the stage. Moby immediately came to the fan's rescue, denouncing the security goon by proclaiming, "I'm the artist who's getting paid the big bucks to be here, and if I say this guy can breakdance onstage, he can. Bring him back up here!" The guard complied, and the breakdancing fan did his thing to the raucous cheers of

the onlooking crowd. Beyond that, Moby invited the fan to come backstage with him and the group after their set. I may not dig the guy's music, but at least Moby is fan-friendly.



**Moby (on video screen) dance-grooves the masses at the Rolling Rock Town Fair.**

After Moby's set concluded, Big Jim and I made our way over to the second stage to check out U.P.O., pausing for several minutes in a long line to procure a soda. As we approached the stage, we realized there wasn't nearly the amount of crowd over this way that there was near the mainstage, this despite U.P.O. having a song on the radio in "Godless." Being not that familiar with the band other than "Godless," I thought U.P.O. did a good job on their set of heavy modern rock, as they played numerous songs from their album, including "Godless." And the crowd that was assembled was into the group as well. Added highlight during U.P.O.'s set was the epic battle between two fans for a drumstick tossed out into the crowd by the band's drummer. The two combatants rolled on the macadam surface for several minutes before one guy forcibly yanked the stick out of the other guy's grip and ran off.



**Chris Weber of U.P.O.**

After U.P.O.'s set ended, Big Jim and I decided to find some shade and get a rest from the oppressive sun. We settled within earshot of Filter, who was getting

underway on the Town Fair main stage. As we rested, we began hearing some complaints from passers-by that the beer tent had run out of brew and had shut off beer sales for the day. We would later learn that officially both were the case. Yes, the concession had run out of beer. But they had reportedly planned on ending beer sales at 4 PM anyway, to curtail any alcohol-induced problems that might arise towards concert's end. Disgruntled fans at the beer tent reportedly were vocal about the vendors shutting off the beer supply, but aside from a few angry words and complaints, no major trouble occurred.

As we didn't attempt to return to the main stage area to view Filter, I mostly just got to hear their set, observed from the edge of the concession area above the main stage area. Filter's set sounded good, and they did mostly all the favorites, including "Medicine," "Dose," and continuing with other assorted tracks from their two albums, Short Bus and Title of Record. Frontman Richard Patrick thanked Rolling Rock for helping get him drunk, and he sounded in a rather jovial mood as he introduced various Filter songs. Eventually Filter exploded with "Hey Man Nice Shot," and concluded their set with the popular hit "Take My Picture." You could hear the roar of the crowd as this song started, and many people clapped along with the tune. From what we got to observe from afar, Filter's set was a hit with the massive crowd gathered around the main stage. And their set seemed to be an improvement over the rushed set I saw Filter perform when they opened for Ozzy Osbourne three years ago.

Having discovered a "short cut" between the main and second stage that bypassed much of the crowd congestion, Big Jim and I headed back to the second stage to check in with the Clarks. Supporting the release of their latest album, Let It Go, and the success of the album's first single, "Better Off Without You" regionally – The Clarks had to be happy to be greeted by a huge hometown crowd gathering at the second stage. As both second-stage headliners and the hometown favorites, The Clarks had the largest crowd of the day at the second stage. They made it count, celebrating the day with a set blending new material from Let It Go and familiar Clarks favorites. From the new album they did the lead-off track "Snowman," "Chasin' Girls" and – to end their set – "Better Off Without You." And along the way, they dropped in established crowdpleasers like the agitated "Help Me Out," and the expected showstopper "Cigarette," during which the crowd rained cigarettes up on the stage to the sheer delight of the band. Singer/guitarist Scott Blasey, bassist Greg Joseph, guitarist Robert James and drummer Dave Minarek basked in the glory of the moment. For The Clarks, this was a triumphant set.

As we turned to head back towards the main stage, something in the sky caught my eye – a huge smiley face! Upon closer examination, I realized it was an Eat'n'Park smiley cookie balloon floating over the concert grounds – bringing one more smile to a good-time event. Big Jim and I searched out two seats in the bleacher section adjoining the main stagefront grounds, so we could witness the day's headliners, the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Having never seen the Peppers before, I wasn't sure what to expect, though a few eyewitness accounts of the band I had heard were favorable. And following an impressive slate of bands and artists throughout the day and before a huge crowd like this, this concert was the Chili Peppers' to win...or lose.

To be honest, I wasn't very impressed with the Chili Peppers' set. To be fair, the early portion of their set was marred by sound difficulty, as something had cut out and the bass was totally missing. This took several songs to correct, hampering the

effect of would-be highlights such as "Give It Away," "Suck My Kiss" and "Scar Tissue." Eventually, the sound glitch was remedied as the Chili's indulged in a funk jam, one of relatively few uptempo passages through their set. The group mixed old and new material, performing their recent hit "Otherside," "I Like Dirt" and the title track to their latest album Californication; and as their set wound down, pulling out their mega-hit "Under The Bridge." But surprisingly, at least for me, the Chili Peppers' set featured a lot of slower material, and came off sounding haphazard and disorganized. Their set list just didn't flow together well. The group also seemed to be avoiding some of their better-known hits like "Aeroplane" and "Higher Ground" in favor of lesser-known material. And whether other people agreed with me or were just exhausted from the whole day and ready to go home, a steady stream of fans commenced an exodus off the concert grounds as the Chili Peppers' set progressed.

The remaining crowd was still massive enough to demand an encore, and the Chili Peppers responded in kind with a three-song encore, starting with a surprise version of Elton John's "Your Song" and ending with a torrid version of Jimi Hendrix's "Fire." Still no "Aeroplane," "Warped" or "My Friends" from their popular One Hot Minute CD – what gives? While the Red Hot Chili Peppers had their moments, their set left me disappointed and wanting more. They didn't deliver the knockout punch this show needed.



**Red Hot Chili Peppers provide the finale to the Rolling Rock Town Fair.**

The event was over, and it wasn't even 7 PM yet – obviously the organizers of Rolling Rock Town Fair intended this event to end before sunset, to avoid problems that might flare up under cover of darkness. And as Big Jim and I made our way out the gates and towards the parking area, we encountered one more bit of entertainment; Chicago-based Mass Ensemble, an experimental and artistic project featuring a 25-foot long stringed long bow, cello, drum sculpture and other invented instruments. Mass Ensemble performed a blend of new age and classical sounds, something totally different from what was happening inside the gates of the Town Fair. We stood and watched this unique form of entertainment for a few minutes, before the security Gestapo showed up and told the group to quit performing and to start dismantling their gear. Gestapo will be Gestapo, I guess.

Overall, I thought the inaugural Rolling Rock Town Fair was a successful event, never fulfilling the fears of the Westmoreland County townspeople. And my hat's off to the show organizers for doing their homework to make sure this event remained trouble-free. With the grounds in front of the main stage covered in woodchip, and water served in paper cones, there were no big projectiles for rowdy fans to lob like at OzzFest. And the event ending in full sunlight further diminished the likelihood of Woodstock-like violence and trouble. A few people had complaints along the way, and certainly with the massive crowds and lines it wasn't a perfect concert event. But given the number of people and the anticipated problems, I thought this event overall was pulled off very smoothly.

And at least for our entourage, even leaving the venue wasn't the hassle we expected. Yes, we did have to wait 30 to 45 minutes to leave, but given the number of people and cars, we still escaped the Westmoreland County Fairgrounds much quicker than we probably would have left Star Lake had the event been held there. Again, credit goes to the organizers for having a good game plan for parking for this event.

With things going as smoothly as they did, I wouldn't be surprised if this turns out just being the first of several such Rolling Rock Town Fairs.



**Big Jim and a big limousine outside the Rolling Rock Town Fair.**

## **WE GET LETTERS**

### **To Whom It May Concern,**

As a local musician in the central Pennsylvania area, I feel it is my responsibility to voice my opinion for myself and other entertainers. I have spent continuous hours practicing, playing, sweating and working very hard to gain even just a little bit of local success. Unfortunately, it seems that all my work is sometimes all for nothing. I spend hundreds of dollars each month advertising and promoting and having such a wide selection of music magazines and newsletters is awesome, but beyond that, it seems a dead end deal. I just wanted to make you aware of the situation from a musician's point of view.

I do not agree with those bands who complain that there is nowhere to play. There are a countless number of clubs. What the problem is, is that those clubs have their select favorite bands and shun away anyone new or not within their "clique." My band (whose name I wish not to reveal at this point in time) has tried on several occasions to get booked into clubs only to be told that we don't draw enough yet.

Okay, so how will we ever draw enough if never given the opportunity to play? Or I've gotten the excuse that a certain club is booked by one specific agent and if that agent doesn't like you, you're screwed again. It's a tight situation and the opportunity for some bands is slim to none. I think it's a shame that so many bands have had to call it quits because no one will give them a chance. If you're not "in" with the "clique," you might as well give up.

At one point of desperation, I called several "so called" booking agents. Sure they made everything sound peachy keen and made me tons of promises of gigs. I have yet to hear from them. That was over a year ago. I am tired of being lied to and led in every possible direction but up.

I know my band is good. We do get gigs and we have a following. We want more and our fans want more. I don't know where else to turn. By writing this letter, I am hoping to find some advice. Whether it be in your magazine or whatever, I am hoping to see some type of change. How are we to grow when we are so stifled? How can we claim to have a great local music scene when only a few bands can actually say that? How can we break out of this dead end situation? Please spread the word to your writers and co-workers that we need to make a change and if I'm willing to work for it, then so should all musicians.

– **Sincerely, CRM, guitarist.**

## **D'SCRIBE RESPONDS:**

CRM, I have no easy answers for you. There is no quick fix or instant gratification in this business. A major part of the problem is that you are dealing with the music BUSINESS, and as far as clubs are concerned, it is a BUSINESS. As one club owner told me a few years ago, he and his club do not exist to make bands' careers happen; the club exists to earn money to put food on the table and a roof over the heads of his wife and kids. To make ends meet in the club business, to be able to pay the wait staff, bartenders, door people, security folks, sound company (if the club uses an in-house system), etc., the club has to book entertainment that draws bodies in the door. The bands in the "clique" you eluded to are likely bands that draw well or bands that draw consistently enough that the club owner ends his night in the black instead of the red. The club owner needs to have those popular crowd-drawing bands each month to make sure the club meets its bottom line; only after that can the club owner take a chance and book the less established groups and artists. What advice can I offer you about cracking that elite "clique?" Keep doing what you are doing. You say your band has a following, keep playing those rooms where that following exists, and keep working with the club owners that are giving your band a chance. Continue to nurture those situations. Keep advertising, promoting and marketing yourselves. Establish a mailing list and keep the names on that list informed about when and where your band is playing.

Don't give up on the rooms where your band is trying to gain bookings – be persistent but polite. Solicit feedback from the club owner about your band and music, and establish a communication with him or her beyond simply trying to land a job. Consider offering to open shows for some of that club's more established drawing bands. On off nights when your band is not playing, visit the room and rub elbows with the staff and patrons. Infiltrate the "in" crowd of that particular room. Networking goes a long way in this business.

Be patient. At least in the Altoona area, it seems the bands that eventually make it here are the ones that keep at it and don't quit. They establish a positive relationship with the rooms where they are happening, network with the crowds and patrons, and are willing to "work with" the club owners when nights do not go as well as expected. It can be a long and difficult struggle to crack the rotation in some

rooms and gain a foothold, but "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," and persistence and patience often pays off in the long run. Good luck.

## **Dear Sparky D'Engineer:**

I hope that you can answer a question that has plagued me since childhood. If every man, woman, and child in China each stood on a chair, and everyone jumped off their chair at exactly the same time, would the earth be thrown off its axis? Also, if prior to jumping, they all yelled at the top of their lungs, would we hear it here in the United States, and how much of a time delay would there be? – **The Right Honorable Governor of Minnesota, Jesse "The Body."**

## **DEAR GUV'NOR JESSE:**

I have been in repeated contact with the Beijing government all week in an effort to persuade them to get all 1,027,000,000 Chinese (1980 estimate) to jump off chairs. I have pleaded with them that it will significantly advance the cause of science. However, they have not been cooperative. They point out the China is a poor country, and lacks a sufficient quantity of chairs. Moreover, many of the chairs that are available are of non-uniform height, meaning that even if all the Chinese jumped off at the same time, they would hit the ground at different times, thus throwing off the results of the experiment. Finally, they point out that discipline among the Chinese people has become notoriously lax since the Cultural Revolution, and many of the participants in the project could be expected to be fooling around when they were supposed to be jumping. The Chinese government suggests that instead of having the entire nation jump off chairs, I should get one representative citizen to jump and multiply the results by 1,027,000,000. I have, needless to say, rejected this solution as grossly inadequate. The possibility of an actual test thus being remote, I have been forced to rely on my considerable powers of inductive logic, to wit: given the principle that every reaction has an equal and opposite reaction, when the Chinese get up on their chairs, they would essentially be pushing the earth down in the process of elevating themselves. Then, when they jumped off, the earth would simultaneously spring back, attracted by the gravitational mass of one billion airborne Chinese persons, with the result that the Chinese and the earth would meet somewhere in the middle, if you follow me. The upshot of this is that action and reaction would cancel each other out and the earth would remain securely in orbit. Just for fun, however--after you've been doing this job for a while you get a pretty bizarre notion of what constitutes a good time--suppose 1,000,000,000 Chinese, give or take 27,000,000, were somehow to materialize atop chairs without their having to elevate themselves thereto. And suppose they jumped off. Having performed astonishing feats of mathematical acrobatics (requiring the entire afternoon, I might note--sometimes I can't believe the crap I spend my time on), I calculate that the resultant thud in aggregate would be the equivalent of 500 tons of TNT. Not bad, but nowhere near enough to dislocate the earth, which weighs 6 sextillion, 588 quintillion short tons. I refuse to even discuss what would happen if all the Chinese yelled at the top of their lungs.

# REPRINTED BY POPULAR DEMAND: ONE MORE BIT OF HOLIDAY SNEER:

## AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTMAS

*By Sparky the Engineer*

There are approximately two billion children (persons under 18) in the world. However, since Santa does not visit children of Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or Buddhist (except maybe in Japan) religions, this reduces the workload for Christmas night to 5% of the total, or 378 million (according to the population reference bureau). At an average (census) rate of 3.5 children per household, that comes to 108 million homes, presuming there is at least one good child in each. Santa has about 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, assuming east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 967.7 visits per second. This is to say that for each Christian household with a good child, Santa has around 1/1000th of a second to park the sleigh, hop out, jump down the chimney, fill the stocking, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left for him, get back up the chimney, jump into the sleigh and get onto the next house. Assuming that each of these 108 million stops is evenly distributed around the earth (which, of course, we know to be false, but will accept for the purposes of our calculations), we are now talking about 0.78 miles per household; a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting bathroom stops or breaks. This means Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second- 3,000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second, and a conventional reindeer can run (at best) 15 miles per hour. The payload of the sleigh adds another interesting element. Assuming that each child gets nothing more than a medium sized LEGO set (two pounds), the sleigh is carrying over 500 thousand tons, not counting Santa himself. On land, a conventional reindeer can pull no more than 300 pounds. Even granting that the "flying" reindeer can pull 10 times the normal amount, the job can't be done with eight or even nine of them-Santa would need 360,000 of them. This increases the payload, not counting the weight of the sleigh, another 54,000 tons, or roughly seven times the weight of the Queen Elizabeth (the ship, not the monarch). 600,000 tons travelling at 650 miles per second creates enormous air resistance - this would heat up the reindeer in the same fashion as a spacecraft re-entering the earth's atmosphere. The lead pair of reindeer would absorb 14.3 quintillion joules of energy per second each. In short, they would burst into flames almost instantaneously, exposing the reindeer behind them and creating deafening sonic booms in their wake. The entire reindeer team would be vaporized within 4.26 thousandths of a second, or right about the time Santa reached the fifth house on his trip. Not that it matters, however, since Santa, as a result of accelerating from a dead stop to 650 mps in .001 seconds, would be subjected to acceleration forces of 17,000 g's. A 250 pound Santa (which seems ludicrously slim) would be pinned to the back of the sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds of force, instantly crushing his bones and organs and reducing him to a quivering blob of pink goo. Therefore, if Santa did exist, he's dead now. Merry Christmas and don't tell the kids!

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