

# The Final Cut

## *Plotting World Domination from Altoona*

Otherwise...CD/Tape/Culture analysis and commentary with D'Scribe, D'Drummer, Da Boy, D'Sebastiano's Doorman, Da Common Man, D' Big Man, Al, 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!

**I KNOW**...Our first official new issue of the year...in September. I know, it does suck. No excuses, just a ton of stuff going, work, breaking in a new computer, a virus attacking that new computer, and all the other hats I wear week in and week out. Alas, it is finally here, the new issue, thanks for waiting. Thanks to my minion of writers and hacks, Ron at Rockpage for keeping this 'zine on line, and Scott, Danielle and the folks at Eyecatchers for keeping our printed edition afloat. And thanks to all who indulge our periodic rantings and ravings, we appreciate the support!

One fresh take before I unleash some pent-up old takes – if you've been reading Rockpage recently, you know I've been on the warpath regarding the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement's brief ban on young people attending the popular Lakemont Park Wing-Offs. I'll review the Wing-Offs themselves in our next issue; but for the moment, I feel the ban – triggered when a minor was caught holding a beer during the July 26 Wing-Off – set a dangerous precedent. If the PLCB and LCE can ban an entire age group of people from the Wing-Off event because of the mere possibility that some over-21 moron could hand a minor a beer, what's to stop them from suddenly banning all young people from attending an Altoona Curve baseball game at Blair County Ballpark, where they serve beer and beer drinkers can sit right next to under-21 baseball fans? Or on a larger statewide scale, PNC Park or Heinz Stadium in Pittsburgh, Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia, or concert venues like Post Gazette Pavilion at Star Lake or Hershey Stadium? Or fire company or church festivals with a beer tent, restaurants like Olive Garden or Red Lobster or Pizza Hut, where beer is sold? Or even your backyard barbecue whenever somebody shows up with a cooler holding beer? Where does the

PLCB and Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement draw the line? And if you study the Liquor Code itself, where does it differentiate between a festival event licensee like the Wing-Off organizers, whose event focuses on food with beer on the side, and a bar owner, whose main business is selling beer and alcohol? Bottom line – our state’s legislators need to take a closer look at the PLCB, LCE, the state’s Liquor Code itself, and its interpretation by the Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement. If the LCE is permitted to its liberal interpretation of the often vague state Liquor Code, we could find ourselves living in a police state where entire families would not be able to attend public events together because of the risk of a young person being offered alcohol. I don’t want to live in such a state, and I imagine most other people do not, either. If you are concerned about this, write your state representatives to keep a closer eye on the PLCB and LCE. Situations like the Wing-Off ban clearly show that the letter of the law can be abused if nobody stands up and says anything about it.

After much bluster and hype, the much-touted XFL completed its first and last season. After all the WWF-driven bluster and bragging about how this new football league would outclass the NFL, the XFL laid a goose egg and floundered, scoring the lowest ratings ever for Saturday night prime time, and becoming the in-house joke of sports hacks everywhere. I actually thought the XFL wasn’t bad, at least not as bad as its critics made it out to be. The football itself wasn’t NFL caliber to be sure, but it was watchable. The camera angles weren’t bad, although the earlier XFL telecasts relied too heavily on the odd zoom-camera angles. And I actually thought the concept of nicknames on the backs of some of the jerseys – i.e. “He Hate Me” – was fresh, a way to inject some WWF-styled attitude and posturing into the players’ personas. And though I didn’t have a ‘local’ or ‘regional’ team to root for, the fact that the New York Enforcers’ eventual quarterback was former Penn Stater Wally Richardson gave me some added incentive to watch and root for the Enforcers. But the drawbacks, from my perspective – the announcers interviewing coaches and players right after key plays, which interrupted the flow of the game and seemed to distract the players from concentrating on the game itself. On top of this, I thought the mid-season rift between New York Enforcers head coach Rusty Tillman and Jesse “The Body” Ventura was totally out of line and stupid. Though they were hyped a lot in the pre-season ads, from a guy’s perspective, we didn’t see enough of the XFL cheerleaders. (Let’s face it, the cheerleaders were there to draw in male viewers, but ultimately were only sparingly shown.) And perhaps the biggest drawback was the way this league was promoted and presented by Vince McMahon...If Vince and the WWF would have presented the XFL as a mere option for football fans to check out while suffering through basketball and hockey seasons – without trying to sell it as better than the NFL – it would have stood a better chance at success. But if you’re going to promote your new football league as better than the NFL, you better have the product to back it up. Vince McMahon and the XFL didn’t.

Perhaps Vince and the WWF would have been better off going after Major League Baseball. For all the XFL’s accusations that the NFL’s players were being paid too much, I think Vince could have made a better case targeting Major League Baseball, with players like Alex Rodriguez pulling in over \$150 million over the next ten years.

I used to be a baseball fan, but not any more. I’ll follow the Pirates, but I know full well a snowball stands a better chance in Hell than the Bucs do of making the playoffs or World Series. Even with the new PNC Park, how can the Bucs match the payroll of guys like George Steinbrenner or Ted Turner? They can’t. Until the issue of baseball’s have’s and have-not’s is resolved so ALL teams have a shot at signing the big talent players, smaller-market teams like Pittsburgh, Milwaukee and Kansas City are just treading water from season to season, without a realistic chance to make the postseason. And for me, I can’t see myself going to a Major League game

and subsidizing the obscene salaries players like Alex Rodriguez and others are making. The game's payscale has gotten way out of hand. If I go to any baseball games this year, it will be to see the Altoona Curve.

I was saddened by the passing of "Pops," Willie Stargell. Stargell was my favorite baseball player when I was a kid, and I often tried to imitate his windmill wind-up at the plate when I got up to bat. And I remember late Pirate broadcaster Bob Prince excitedly proclaiming "Chicken On The Hill with Will" whenever Stargell cracked a homer during a Pirate home game (as I recall, chicken was free at Stargell's "Chicken On The Hill" diner whenever he slammed a home run).

Back to football one more time...Since college football season is just a few weeks away, what do I think of Penn State? After a 5-7 season last year, I'm being realistic about the Lions. I do not expect a run at the National Championship, nor even placement in a BCS Bowl game. But I am hopeful of a winning record, given the new Beaver Stadium addition, a seemingly weaker Big Ten schedule this year, and some of last year's redshirts stepping up and making themselves known. I'm going to predict 7-4, and at least a more competitive team. And MEMO TO D'DRUMMER: I'll even accept the Lions going 1-11 this season (not really), provided that "1" is against Michigan! I have to start recouping some of that lost beer sometime!

MEMO TO EVERYONE: Grow some skin! It seems people are so thin-skinned, sensitive and easily offended anymore! Take the case of the band Stept On and their new disc Lonely (reviewed later in this issue)...The sleeve art shows photos of all four members of the band robbing a six-pack store at gunpoint. Obviously it is intended as tongue-in-cheek humor, and anybody with a working brain should realize it is a joke and not to be taken seriously. Yet some thin-skinned fools griped that Stept On shouldn't have included these photos, because they might entice some brainless kid somewhere to go out and knock off a liquor store. GET REAL! Kids checking out Stept On's CD should (A) be old enough already to know the difference between right and wrong, and know already that armed robbery is wrong; or (B) have a RESPONSIBLE parent/guardian go over the sleeve photos with them and point out that the photos are staged and not real, and that robbery is wrong. (Just like a RESPONSIBLE parent should watch television with their children and point out that WWF Raw Is War is fiction and not reality, and that their kid shouldn't go out and try to imitate the Dudleys putting someone through a table, etc.) If a kid then goes out and knocks off the local beer store, they should be HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS! It's not up to Stept On to be the role models or purveyors of morality here! Unfortunately, because they don't want unnecessary obstacles preventing their music from being heard by prospective fans, Stept On is reluctantly changing the sleeve art on future pressings of the disc to eliminate the offensive photos. Thin-skinnedness and super-sensitivity win again, and freedom of expression is squelched. I often wonder if the people who claim they are "offended" actually are, or if they are just sensationalizing a given opportunity to publicize their own personal agenda.

I guess the bottom line on my above rant is: *I'm offended by people who are easily offended.*

Speaking of Stept On, one of the songs on their new album is called "Snowed In," which reminds me...On a rare Saturday night this past winter when I was SNOWED IN and couldn't get out to do my weekend band-watching, I decided to do something I hadn't done for ages – watch an episode of Saturday Night Live! I hadn't seriously attempted to watch SNL since Mike Myers was on it! It actually wasn't half bad! I don't remember any names of the comedians that currently comprise the "Not Ready for Prime Time Players," but there actually were a few funny skits. There were a few duds as well, and "Weekend Update" outright sucked. But it was better than I expected, at least no worse than any other time I've viewed SNL in the past (and

let's face it, there were clunker skits back when John Belushi and Dan Ayckroyd were on it). And Lenny Kravitz was musical guest, which didn't suck. But they did botch the ending of the show, cutting Lenny Kravitz' second song off for commercials and not officially ending the show.

And now, live from Altoona, IT'S THE FINAL CUT! On with d'reviews...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Scrite', with a horizontal line underneath.

**FROGWINGS – CROAKIN' AT TOAD'S (Flying Frog)** The brainchild of Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks, Frogwings was assembled in 1997 to enable Butch to perform with his nephew, guitarist Derek Trucks (now a permanent member of the Allman Brothers Band). In assembling Frogwings, Butch put together a jam band "supergroup" of musical talent, including Derek, bassist Oteil and keyboard player Kofi Burbridge, Aquarium Rescue Unit guitarist Jimmy Herring, and Latin percussionist Marc Quinones. Searching for a singer, Frogwings first settled on Edwin McCain; however, McCain's record label balked at the idea of Edwin appearing on an album with Frogwings. Eventually Blues Traveler frontman John Popper was recruited, the group crafted some compositions and hit the road. A live album released on Butch Trucks' own jam band indy label, Flying Frog Records, Croakin' at Toad's was mostly recorded during a hot performance at Toad's Place nightclub in New Haven, Connecticut (one track, "Eddie's Got a Boyfriend," was recorded during the same tour at The Wetlands in New York City). If you are a fan of top-notch musicians throwing caution to the wind and indulging their wildest musical whims, this album is for you. Adventurous jamming and instrumental joyrides are abundant here, a throwback to early Santana and Duane Allman-era Allman Brothers (the band name Frogwings itself is actually derived from a quote by the late Duane Allman). Particularly hot throughout the album is the guitar interaction between Derek Trucks and Jimmy Herring, who blend, play off one another, and match each other so closely you might think they were telepathically connected. Perhaps the most entertaining display is on the playful 16-minute instrumental jam "Eddie's Got A Boyfriend" – starting with the two guitarists "gossiping" back and forth on their respective instruments, the instrumental slowly builds into an all-out jamming midsection, before decelerating into more playfulness between Trucks and Herring – including a dual guitar recital of the "Pledge of Allegiance!" Another highlight is the opening excursion "Kick n Bach," which finds the two guitarists blending and harmonizing, before John Popper joins in to scat along; the track then escalates into a heated jam session before the percussion section chimes in with some solo fireworks of their own. We hear a playful island-styled tune in the Popper-fronted "Hurdy Gurdy Fandango," harder-driving jams in "Pattern," "Ganja" and "Among Your Pillows;" and a Latin samba-styled jam in "Just One." The instrumental performances alone are worth the price of admission, whether you're intrigued by the Trucks/Herring guitar displays, Marc Quinones' ever-present Latin percussion edge, or John Popper's trademark harmonica magic. Every track has a different flavor and instrumental magic waiting to unfold. These veteran players make it all sound fun and almost effortless. For fans of jam bands and instrumental virtuosity, Frogwings' Croakin' at Toad's is a fun album start to end, and an album that will make you wish you had caught this tour in person to watch it all unfold. Definite BUY OR DIE!  
RATING 9.7/10.0

**DOUBLE TROUBLE – BEEN A LONG TIME (Tone Cool)** Double Trouble – bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris Layton - were the bandmates of the late Stevie Ray Vaughan. Nearly ten years after the helicopter crash that claimed Vaughan's life, Been A Long Time is Double Trouble picking up the pieces and moving on, with the help of an all-star cast of musical friends. As expected, the base sound here is blues and blues-driven rock. What is unexpected, though, is how Double Trouble and their guests stretch out on a variety of styles with relatively few reminders of their Stevie Ray Vaughan past. With help from guitarists Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Charlie Sexton, organist Reese Wynans and singer Malford Milligan, "Cry Sky" fittingly opens the album as a soaring, soulful prayer coming to grips with loss, ultimately realizing it is part of the overall scheme of things, and that time eventually heals all wounds. From here, Double Trouble and their guests move forward, stretch out and have some fun. Fronted by Doyle Bramhall II on vocals and guitar, "Say One Thing" is an upbeat, sassy funk number. Then, teaming with the guitar corps of Shepherd, Sexton and Van Wilks, and topped by a spirited vocal performance from Susan Tedeschi, Double Trouble rocks out on Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll." Other highlights along the way include the playful and catchy Jimmie Vaughan-Lou Ann Barton duet on Johnny Watson's "In The Middle of the Night;" the Jonny Lang-fronted brash and delta-bluesy "Groundhog Day;" and the tender Susan Tedeschi-fronted ballad "In The Garden," with a cameo appearance from guitarist Eric Johnson. Then, with Dr. John on piano and vocals and Willie Nelson helping out on guitar, the album finishes with the mellow "Baby, There's No One Like You." While Tommy Shannon and Chris Layton acknowledge the loss of Stevie Ray Vaughan here, Been a Long Time suggests that they have accepted that Stevie is gone and they must move on. Their guests give heartfelt and inspired performances throughout the album, with Shannon and Layton being the two constants who tie the project into a cohesive whole effort. While the guests' voices and stylistic leanings vary, Double Trouble's steady rhythms give this album consistency from start to end. With a little help from their friends, Double Trouble picks up the pieces, and gives us an upbeat and triumphant set on Been A Long Time. For Double Trouble, there is life after Stevie. BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.2/10.0

**R.L. BURNSIDE – WISH I WAS IN HEAVEN SITTING DOWN (Fat Possum/Epitaph)** Ever since Fat Possum Records began distributing his albums through pioneer punk/ska record label Epitaph, R.L. Burnside has been recognized more and more as the most cutting-edge blues artist of the past 30 years. His last album in 1998, the critically acclaimed Come On In, was a bold set which contrasted raw blues against modern electronica; one of its songs, "It's Bad You Know," was featured in The Sopranos television series and soundtrack. Burnside's latest album, Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down, is a smoother marriage of raw blues and technology. It is a more revealing, personal and even autobiographical album on which R.L. tells his story and shares life experiences. We learn on the album's opening and closing tracks, "Hard Time Killing Floor" and "R.L.'s Story" respectively, that R.L. had a hard life early - his father, two brothers and an uncle were all murdered within the space of one month after migrating to Chicago from Mississippi in the 1950's to seek a better life. R.L. further bares his soul on the remorseful "Got Messed Up," where slide guitar meets ambient beats; and on the acoustic title track "Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down," where he yearns for rest and forgiveness after a hard life. Burnside shares his wisdom regarding relationships on "Bad Luck City;" but relates a friend's not-so-good experience with the opposite sex on the hard-driving "See What My Buddy Done." R.L. gives us some upbeat and lighthearted moments on the album as well, musing about skirt-chasing and girl-watching on "Miss Maybelle" and "My Eyes Keep Me In Trouble;" exploring the down side of 'up'

on "Too Many Ups;" and poking fun at himself on "Nothin' Man." R.L. also updates the Aretha Franklin-popularized soul classic "Chain of Fools." While the Come On In album accentuated the oddball clash of blues and technology, Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down shifts the emphasis back to R.L. Burnside. R.L.'s vocal delivery is raw and sincere - we hear the voice of a man who has weathered good and bad in his 73 years; his blues are authentic and heartfelt, the real deal. The musical blend of blues and technology supporting R.L.'s voice sounds a lot smoother here, with the unlikely mix of slide guitars, harmonica, samples, DJ scratching and electronic beats all nicely combining to complement R.L. Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down brings R.L. Burnside's blend of raw Mississippi blues and technology to full fruition, without ever compromising the heart and soul of his music. This album is both a strong blues album, and an album that breaks new ground and explores new frontiers for the blues genre. BUY BEFORE R.L. DIES!

RATING 9.8/10.0

**SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS – LIQUORED UP AND LACQUERED DOWN (TVT)**

Soon coming to a Johnstown Folkfest near you...Guitarist/singer Rick Miller first coined the band name Southern Culture On The Skids one day in the early 80's when he heard a radio announcer proclaim the band R.E.M. "the NEW sound of the South." Rick's response was that if R.E.M. was the new sound of the South, then "Southern culture was on the skids." Since that time, Southern Culture On The Skids has risen to national prominence by celebrating the "redneck" sound and imagery of the South. Their music has been a blend of old-school roots rock, rockabilly and country with a slightly punkish flavor, with tongue-in-cheek lyrics celebrating Southern stereotypes such as fried chicken, beehive hairdos, dirt tracks and hot rods, trailer parks, moonshine whiskey, trashy roadside bars and more. The group scored their big breakthrough in 1996 with their novelty surf-rock hit "Camel Walk," off their album Dirt Track Date. Their latest album, Liquored Up and Lacquered Down, is another fun collection of songs celebrating redneck culture. The lightly salsafied title track opener celebrates the bar queen with the big hairdo and the cigarette hanging out of her mouth, primping to turn heads at the local roadside tavern. On the other side of the bar, bassist Mary Huff – herself sporting that big hairdo – gives one of her most spirited vocal performances on Naomi Neville's "Hittin' On Nothing," warning would-be suitors to stay away unless they have diamonds and other gifts to share. Along the way, Southern Culture On The Skids celebrates the ups and downs of "Corn Liquor," sings the praises of "Cheap Motels," and idolizes a uniquely Southern low-budget entrepreneur on "King of the Mountain." In his saddest country moan, Rick Miller laments being "Drunk and Lonesome (Again)," and how his bad romantic past has made him "Damaged Goods;" while in a Patsy Cline vein, Mary Huff croons her own ode to loneliness, "Just How Lonely." Southern Culture On The Skids streamlines their sound further on this album, with glossier production, the presence of several horn players, and Chris "Crispy" Bess' keyboard fills, which give these songs more of an early 60's pop feel. Yet this group's mix of hillbilly-ish rock and wit remain fresh; the tunes are simple and accessible, while their lyrics continue to cleverly paint Hee Haw-like pictures of the South. Liquored Up and Lacquered Down might be the best way to experience this type of Southern culture since Hee Haw and The Dukes of Hazzard were popular. You might want to throw this in the CD player the next time you have a hankerin' for an "Eight Piece Box" of fried chicken and "Banana Puddin'." RATING 9.1/10.0

**MUSHROOMHEAD – XX (Eclipse)** Formed in 1993 as a side project by members of various Cleveland area bands, Mushroomhead has risen to regional prominence throughout the upper Midwest with their eclectic blend of hardcore metallic

aggression, rap, industrial and even gothic musical stylings; combined with their unforgettable modern metal 'theatre of the absurd' stage show. Mushroomhead's national debut with Eclipse Records, XX is at once eclectic, eccentric, aggressive, angry and unpredictable. We hear a cacophony of various styles of sonic attack here, from the full-out metallic aggression of "Before I Die," "Bwomp" and "Never Let It Go;" to the dark, quiet ambience of the instrumental interlude "Epiphany;" to the chaotic industrial "Episode 29." The album's first radio track, "Solitaire/Unraveling," at once brings to mind modern contemporaries like Rob Zombie and Powerman 5000, but also suggests theatric rock legend Alice Cooper as a possible inspiration. The fusion of thunderous power chords and piano underscoring on the following track, "These Filthy Hands," recalls Fire of Unknown Origin-era Blue Oyster Cult. Also clever is "Never Let It Go," which – true to its title – closes with several erratic false endings, with Mushroomhead seemingly never wanting to let the song go. Mushroomhead's lyrics are as wide open as their music; at once calculating, angry, satirical and psychotic. Many of the group's words here explore the brink between restraint and rage, between pushing the envelope and crossing the line, and between resolving inner conflict and veering off the deep end. Mushroomhead throws out the rulebook on XX; the result is an action-packed thrill ride of an album that never sits still. In a present-day musical climate filled with cookie-cutter aggressive rock bands, Mushroomhead's sense of musical and lyrical adventurism – and their wild visual presentation to match – sets them apart from the rest of the pack.

RATING 8.8/10.0

**HASTE – WHEN REASON SLEEPS (Century Media)** As any trend develops in popular music, over time one gets a sense of the parameters of that trend, and who the innovators and the imitators of the trend are. The current modern "rage" metal movement has now been around long enough that a regular listener or observer can get a sense of who is defining the genre, and who is on the bandwagon for the ride. At least to this scribe's ears, Alabama's Haste falls somewhere in between innovator and imitator. Through the tracks of Haste's second CD, When Reason Sleeps, we frequently hear interesting guitar arrangements and chord progressions from the tandem of Jason Burns and Nick Brunson, riding atop booming Pantera-ish rhythms from bassist Brandon Thrasher and drummer Jeff Gardner. On the instrumental and musicianship end of things, at least, Haste shows some innovation through this disc's eleven tracks, and the potential of taking their brand of raging metal somewhere. But then we add the vocals...the lead vocal screamfest offered up by Kelly Reaves and Chris Mosley is an acquired taste at best. Picture two vocalists screaming at the top of their lungs, both in distinct and different screaming voices, and then coordinating and "harmonizing" their screams in tandem, and you get an idea what these two are up to here. If you're into vocal spleen-venting, Haste's scream attack might be for you. For me, it's a bit overblown and calculated – screaming as a way of emoting and emphasizing certain points within the course of a song, and driving an angry message home is one thing. But screaming for the sake of screaming with little variation or dramatic emphasis weakens the overall effect here. I leave this album scratching my head and wondering if Haste is really all that pissed off, or simply trying to out-"rage" their peers. If you must hear every angry metal album out there, be my guest...

RATING 6.7/10.0

**SCHLEIGHO – CONTINENT (Flying Frog)** Based in New York City, Schleigho (pronounced "Shlay-ho") is one of the discoveries of Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks' new jam-oriented indy record label, Flying Frog Records. On their Flying Frog debut (their fourth album overall), Continent, this funk/jazz quartet embarks on an action-packed musical odyssey where alluring grooves blend with instrumental

technical ecstasy a touch of unpredictability. We hear guitarist/flute/sax player Suke Cerulo, keyboardist Jesse Gibbon, bassist Matt Rubano and drummer Erik Egol establish a musical story line on each track, before venturing off to play nip-and-tuck with each other on their respective instruments. We hear numerous tempo and chord changes, sudden starts and stops, and tension and release on nearly every track as these musicians challenge each other and their listeners to hang on for the joyride. Every track on Continent allows each band member to showcase and improvise his own skills while pushing his bandmates to the stratosphere. The title track "Continent," for example, first focuses the attention on Suke's flute and sax skills, before Jesse's piano challenges the rhythm section of Matt and Erik to a duel in the composition's second half. On the harder-edged "Sumo," Jesse's terse organ phrasings take the initial spotlight, before tossing the ball to bassist Matt and Suke's guitar respectively. Other highlights include "Keep It In The Car," establishing its tasty funk-jazz groove before downshifting into a quiet mellow interlude, and then building into a full-fledged musical thunderstorm by track's end. These fusions of jazz, funk and progressive-leaning rock are rooted both in the jazz traditions of Herbie Hancock and Miles Davis, as well as the progressive traditions of Dixie Dregs and even King Crimson; but Schleigho has enough sense of adventure to chart unexplored territory here and forge a direction all their own. Fans of cutting edge fusion and instrumental adventurism should find Schleigho's Continent musical territory well worth exploring.

RATING 8.8/10.0

**STept ON – LONELY (S.A.M. Records)** After establishing themselves in several previous area bands, the members of Stept On converged in early 1999, and quickly generated a large fan base on Central PA stages with their explosive live show and musical blend of raw power and melody. The group's debut CD, Lonely, is an action-packed set which successfully brings those elements to the forefront. Stept On's base sound is hard-hitting, funk/metal-edged modern rock circa Faith No More, but the members of Stept On demonstrate abundant musical smarts to take this sound to a place uniquely their own. Drummer Jim Bagrosky and bassist Adam Zimmer pace the songs with hungry, aggressive rhythms. Matt Day displays his exceptional guitar talents throughout the disc, augmenting the mood of each song with snarling guitar riffage, clever usage of effects and tasteful solo work – particularly on the ballad "Die 4 You." And singer Chuck Budzina defines each song further with his agitated delivery, running the gamut from passionate singing and soul-baring to the occasional rap. Stept On demonstrates a knack for strong song hooks throughout the Lonely disc. Each song contains its own unique plot twist to hold the listener's interest, and the group never stays in one place for too long on any given song. Lyrically, Lonely's songs loosely follow a theme of emotional pain and frustration converted into hope. The title song "Lonely," for instance, is ultimately about weathering childhood hardships to be a stronger individual. The funk-edged leadoff track, "Drowning;" the radio single "Day After Day" and "Pride" all describe the struggle to maintain one's dignity and integrity despite criticism and bad advice from others. "Thrown Away" denounces the sacrifice of one's individuality, while "Snowed In" offers hope to a friend facing personal turmoil and struggle. On the frantic and explosive "Voices In My Head," inner turmoil reaches the boiling point; while on the calmer side, Stept On gives us a somber love ballad in the aforementioned "Die 4 You;" and laments a fallen friend on the closing track "Iron Cross." Recorded at Saturation Acres in Danville and produced by Paul Smith (The Badlees) and Stept On, Lonely sounds full and powerful. The album is a cohesive whole effort, where the musical action is nonstop. Lonely should be one of the strongest rock albums to emerge from the Keystone State this year, and is an album that successfully



translates Stept On's live energy and firepower into the studio setting. DEFINITE BUY OR DIE!!!  
RATING 9.8/10.0

**FELIX AND THE HURRICANES – THE FEELING (self-produced)** The moment "Hurricaniacs" far and wide have been waiting years for has finally arrived – Felix and the Hurricanes' first studio album, The Feeling, is here! Recorded over the course of nine months at Data Music Services in Altoona and co-produced by The Hurricanes and Dave Villani, The Feeling delivers everything fans have come to expect from the group, plus a few unexpected treats along the way. As expected, The Hurricanes give us a blend of blues, funk and Southern-flavored rock, highlighted by frequent bursts of guitar mastery by lead Hurricane Felix Kos; robust, heartfelt vocals from Felix and bassist Jeff Clapper, and rock-solid rhythms from Jeff and drummer Bobby Watters. While this group proudly carries the torch of early Santana, the Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Stevie Ray Vaughan in their sound, they successfully interpret those influences with their own voice and feeling, making the resulting sound their own. The Hurricanes mix it up nicely on The Feeling, with every track a highlight; from upbeat blues rockers like the opener "Just Had To Play The Blues," "Keep On Rockin'" (both featuring hot licks from guest harmonica player John Stevens) and the album's first single "The Lonely One;" to the funkier displays "Icy You" and "Neighbors;" to the hard-rocking "Black Widow;" the bare-knuckles blues of "Free;" the down-and-out blues of "On The Bottom Again;" and the uplifting title track "The Feeling" – capped by Felix's atmospheric song-ending guitar display. And then there are the additional treats, such as Jeff Clapper's reggae-flavored "Talk About Love;" "Good Lovin'" with its 50's-pop intro; and the funk-rocker "You Say, I Say," showcasing the talents of guest sax player Randy Jackson. Co-producer Dave Villani underscores several tracks with a tasty keyboard presence, especially on "Neighbors;" "On The Bottom Again;" and the Hurricanes' instrumental tip of the hat to Carlos Santana, "Spanish Rose...One For Carlos." The Feeling is not just an album, it is the foundation of what Felix and the Hurricanes has always been about – music born through feeling and emotion. Every tune on this album is played with purpose and conviction; you can tell this trio's heart and soul is invested in each and every song. The Feeling captures the essence and feeling of Felix and the Hurricanes, and is an excellent listen for "Hurricaniacs" and the uninitiated alike. Needless to say, BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.5/10.0

**NEVERMOURE – PRODUCT OF MODERN NEED (self-produced)** The past year has seen Altoona-based Nevermoure quickly ascend the ranks to become one of this area's most popular rock band attractions, as well as one of the state's most talked-about acts. The group's latest album, Product of Modern Need, captures in the studio setting the same kind of excitement and enthusiasm that Nevermoure generates on the live stage. Nevermoure demonstrates their talent for sharp, catchy pop song hooks throughout the album; while playing most of these songs with a frenzied, almost reckless delivery sure to elevate pulse rates. Drummer Shawn Hocherl's high-velocity drumming suggests a runaway train threatening to jump the tracks at any moment, challenging bassist "Big Dawg" and guitarist Mike Ritchey to hang on for dear life. Yet through this chaotic pace, Nevermoure's musicianship is amazingly tight and sharp, and Mike Ritchey demonstrates a knack for tasty, fluid guitar leads and fills throughout. Singer, rhythm guitarist and lyricist Adam Marino likewise sings his words full-throttle, leaving heart and soul on nearly every track. Most of Product of Modern Need's eleven songs are clear-cut winners; from the adrenaline rush of the opening track "Go," "Realize" and the action-packed ode to alcoholism "Forever Yours;" to the MTV-caliber hard-rocking ear candy of "All Along,"

the album's first radio single "Sweet Christine," the playful "Toll Booth Fantasy" and the slightly punkish "LuvLust." And on the two occasions when Nevermoure does slow it down – on "Always" and especially "Still" – the group exhibits depth, warmth, powerful vocal harmonies and attention to detail. Studio engineer Dave Villani's contributions of keyboards on "Always" and strings on "Still" give both tunes a classy edge. Recorded at Villani's Data Music Services in Altoona, Product of Modern Need sounds clean and polished, yet raw and never too safe. Nevermoure's fresh, exciting and unpredictable live show has quickly made them one of the most talked-about groups in the state; Product of Modern Need duplicates that excitement and energy, exposes the group's obvious talent of pop songcraft, and makes the statement that Nevermoure is a band worthy of continued regional – and hopefully eventual national – attention. BUY OR DIE! (Can be purchased at the group's live shows, or check out the website [www.nevermoure.com](http://www.nevermoure.com))

RATING 8.9/10.0



**Nevermoure.**

**BEAD – DEAD LEAVES (self-produced)** From east-central PA, Bead first surfaced with a full-length self-titled debut CD in 1995, an album which tipped the hat to the then-popular grunge movement with its Alice In Chains/Soundgarden-styled sound. Late last year, Bead surfaced with this five-song EP, Dead Leaves, a disc which steps up the aggression and intensity and redefines this band's current sound. Singer Kris Guitas, guitarist Jason Dampman, bassist Jamie Smith and drummer Rich Pastuszek lay it on the line over these tracks, with rhythms and guitar riffage constantly on the attack, and passionate, soul-baring vocals which go for broke on every song. Bead (who have since changed their handle to Dead Leaves to avoid potential problems with another band with prior legal dibs on the Bead name) vary the attack here, from the Pantera-like metallic intensity of the opener "Heroine" and the hammering metal of "No Reply" to the Tool-like moodiness of "Center Piece" to the brooding heaviness of "Fall Back" and the group's breakthrough regional radio single "Dead Leaves." These songs show variety, mood, dynamics and depth; and Bead sells their musical souls on each and every tune. Recorded at Stressfree Studios and engineered by Marshall Deasy, Dead Leaves sounds heavy and full, yet jagged and hungry. This CD is the catalyst which has helped propel Bead (Dead Leaves) into the upper echelons

of the eastern PA rock scene, and provides a powerful statement that this band has indeed arrived and is poised to do more serious damage on the state's music scene in the coming months and years. Get your mitts on this one, it is hot! (Can be purchased at the group's shows, or check out the web site [www.deadleaves.com](http://www.deadleaves.com).)

RATING 8.8/10.0

**SANITY'S GRIP – THE AFTERMATH (self-produced)** Altoona-based power trio Sanity's Grip first surfaced last summer with a four-song EP called Doomsday, an introduction to the group's dark brand of early Metallica-rooted modern metal. A year later, the group's first full-length album, The Aftermath, elaborates and expands on the sounds and themes established on Doomsday. Recorded in their own home studio, The Aftermath finds Sanity's Grip taking more chances, both musically and lyrically. New guitarist Todd Belardi experiments with distortion and other effects during the course of the album, while drummer James Veazey and bassist Adam Marlett attempt trickier multi-speed rhythms and arrangements. Veazey, also the group's main songwriter and lead singer, explores several interesting topics through The Aftermath's nine songs – including today's world gone haywire on the volatile opener "Code To Explode," minds pushed to the brink of insanity on the hard-driving "Mindtrip" and the tension-and-release of "Distilled In Me," and a life destroyed by drugs on the angry assault "Down the Drain." Perhaps the album's strongest song is the dark and introspective ballad "Dragons & Butterflies," coming to terms with long-term scars from childhood abuse and pain. Veazey sells these songs with a jagged, anguished vocal delivery; while the instrumental performances are aggressive and throw caution to the wind. The limitations of their home studio result in uneven production in spots here; one can just imagine what a major studio could do with this material. Overall, though, Sanity's Grip shows definite progress and forward motion on The Aftermath, an album which further establishes this trio as a metal band with a distinct style and vision. (Can be purchased at the group's shows or through their website on mp3.com.) RATING 7.9/10.0

**ASHES TO ASHES – BIG MOVING PARTS (Ata Boy Records)** Pittsburgh power trio Ashes To Ashes, over the course of their five CD discography, have constantly displayed musical growth on each subsequent release, while never sacrificing the spontaneity, sharpness and wit which have remained at the very foundation of their sound. On their fifth disc, Big Moving Parts, Ashes to Ashes has embraced studio electronica and technology, utilizing the toys at their disposal to take their sound boldly forward while retaining their trademark wit and edge. The end result style-wise takes more of a Collective Soul-like lean, with song arrangements that at times sound almost mechanized and machinelike, prone to sharper mood swings and less predictability. Singer/guitarist Andy Bell, bassist Ed Beeler and drummer Dave Campbell adapt well to this adjusted musical framework, executing the chops and tightness to cleanly pull it off throughout the disc. Most importantly, as the album unfolds, this is still Ashes to Ashes – while the overall sound has modernized with the times, the songs themselves offer that trademark Ashes observational sarcasm and wit about simple boy meets girl situations and other quarky fare. The opening track "Darkside" illustrates Ashes to Ashes' fusion of studio technology and wit, using a twisting, revolving riff to underscore Andy's expose about his mysterious dark inner self. Subsequent tracks through the album's course experiment with the balance of studio gimmicks and the trio's power-pop sensibilities, with mostly impressive results like "Like A Metaphor," "Maybe You Kill" with its evolving harmonies, "Underground," "Violent Girlfriend" and "Times Ten." The closing acoustic-leaning ballad "Bury Me" is a further departure for the group, layering acoustic and electric guitars with

atmospheric electronics and a complex melody for a totally different side of Ashes to Ashes' musical persona. Big Moving Parts is also an enhanced disc that will do some neat things in your computer – further testimony to Ashes to Ashes' embracing of technology. Big Moving Parts is Ashes to Ashes' most progressive and experimental album to date, yet it still retains the personality, quark strangeness and charm the trio has established over their first four albums. Worth a listen. (To obtain, visit Ashes to Ashes' website, [www.ataboy.com](http://www.ataboy.com), or check out various Pittsburgh area CD stores.)

RATING 8.6/10.0



**Andy Bell of Ashes to Ashes.**

**SPINEBELT – THE THRONE OF THE HIVE (self-produced)** We first explored the dark moody world of Harrisburg's Spinebelt last year when the group released their 3-song debut EP, Shiv. This sampler gave us a hint of the terse metallic terrain within which this band dwells. Their full-length disc, The Throne of the Hive, elaborates and further defines that terrain, while establishing a theme of the futility of most people's everyday lives – punching the time clock and slaving in the cubicle, never getting ahead or advancing to the upper echelon of the chain – and the resulting rage spawned by being pushed too far. Spinebelt's sense of melody surfaces more clearly here; and the songs themselves are stronger, with a greater sense of dynamics. The group has improved their mastery of tension-and-release within the course of a song, destabilizing the soundscape during the verses and setting the stage for often apocalyptic choruses. Frontman/guitarist Butch Lloyd has further defined his vocal style, too - varying between spoken word passages, quiescent anguished singing and explosive rage. Along with Butch's terse buzzsaw guitar riffage, the rest of Spinebelt's attack is more clearly defined as well – Josh Warsteiner's terse synthesizer fills as a lethal weapon, drummer John K's machine gun-like beats and fills, and Bill Atkinson's rumbling bass lines and timely bestial bellows. Songwise, "Drone/Worker/Slave" plays out the plight of everyman's

everyday nine-to-five futility; while the radio single "Christopher Walken" explores the internal war of wills between oppressor and oppressed (or employer and employed); and "Needle, Prick" examines the moment of desperation when one's will and spirit are broken. The explosive "Army of One" takes us beyond the breaking point as psychotic rage begins to play out. Other highlights include "Mine" with its world-gone-back-to-nature theme, and the somber "Give My Regards to Oblivion" and "The Last Time." The Throne of the Hive is an action-packed listen all the way through, and represents Spinebelt as a band willing to take chances and explore new terrain. If terse soundscapes and apocalyptic visions are your passion, this album is definite BUY OR DIE! (Can be purchased at the group's shows, or visit the website [www.spinebelt.com](http://www.spinebelt.com), e-mail [spineonline@hotmail.com](mailto:spineonline@hotmail.com), or write Spinebelt World League, P.O. Box 54425, Philadelphia, PA 19148.)

RATING 9.1/10.0

**RU21 – PLAYING WITH MY MIND (self-produced)** The world can always use a good song hook. And judging by this debut, Lancaster-based RU21 has an ample supply of them. Playing With My Mind plays with a wide assortment of catchy song hooks, executing them along a power-punk/pop base sound not far removed from Matthew Sweet, Lit and Toadies with a little Elvis Costello spit thrown in for good measure. RU21's driving force is singer/songwriter Geoff Hamer, who crafts catchy boy-meets-girl anthems and does some deeper soul-searching along the way. RU21 are at their best on playful numbers such as the opening title track "Playing With My Mind," the closer "Standing" and especially "Without You" with its memorable hook and witty storyline. Also good are the angrier punk of "Yesterday's Gone," the disillusionment of "Child's Dream" and the driving guitar rock of "Busted Flat." Geoff and RU21 sell these tunes with full-force delivery, crunchy guitars, acidic vocals and timely harmonies. Playing With My Mind is a fun album that grows on you with repeat listens, good high-energy, to-the-point modern rock and roll. Well worth checking out.

RATING 8.5/10.0

**CLOUD PARTY – REAL (Googolplex Records)** Fact versus fiction, and reality versus illusion are prominent themes on the third album by Reading-based Cloud Party, Real. Even the premise of the recording of the album itself toys with reality and illusion; the album was recorded "live" during a special webcast over the Internet on Halloween 1999, of all dates, with a few overdubs and adjustments included later on – just what is real, and what is an illusion? On the title track, "Real," singer/rhythm guitarist/ringleader Jim Speese questions the realities of a past relationship – was that euphoria and bliss ever really there? On the angrier "All These Useless Truths," Jim questions what is true at any given moment, and what we should believe. "Let's Pretend" yearns for fantasy to become reality, while "Used To Be" yearns for the reality of an earlier time, place and situation. Beyond the explorations of reality, Cloud Party gives us several other interesting topics on Real; the soaring Pink Floyd-like opener "The Mansion on the Hill" symbolically compares the current state of rock and roll to an empty and deserted hall, once bustling but now empty and abandoned. One of the more uptempo numbers on the disc, "The Nine Headed Hydra of Love," likens the many idiosyncrasies of the typical love relationship to a nine-headed monster. And "Shadow of An Angel" explores ambition and its price tag. Overall, Real is deeper and more melancholy than past Cloud Party discs; with much of the album embracing Pink Floyd-like oceanic walls of sound. Still, Jim Speese's cynical words and voice give the album a David Lowery/Crackerlike edge. The sound here is big and full, with Cloud Party's layered mix of guitars and organ providing plenty of depth, and impressive backing vocal performances from guests D'arey October, Alisa Anderson and David Mattes fleshing out the sound

further. Perhaps the underlying message of Real is that real is the here and now; and this album is Cloud Party in the here and now, a band not afraid to explore new lyrical and musical terrain. (Can be obtained through the group's web site, [www.cloudparty.com](http://www.cloudparty.com))

RATING 8.9/10.0

## **DA BOY FROM DA BURGH**

*By Mark Da Boy*

First, da BIG NEWS! I'm a DAD! Luke Allen Wesesky – Born February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001! He decided to show up a couple of weeks early. He was 4 pounds 2 ounces, and now he's growing by leaps and bounds! I'm already eyeing up a few toy drum sets at Toys-R-Us. Da Girl is doing fine as well. She had some rough going at labor, but she's recovered. In other news, I won an award for "Best Production/Creative Services Director" of the year at the Pittsburgh March of Dimes 2001 Achievement in Radio Awards. Many of the big markets across the U.S. have this event. What's great about this is another market judges the submissions – keeping it (hopefully) above political connotations. Has it given me a big head? A little bit. Hey, I beat some tough competition, and after being in Pittsburgh for over four years now, I hope that this award proves that I've got the goods! A quick note: This is a new segment intro – since it was last JULY that I wrote the majority of these reviews! On we go...

**BILLY JOEL – 2000 YEARS (THE MILLENNIUM CONCERT) (Columbia)** Even though 2001 is the official start of the millennium, the world pretty much chose 2000 as our start date. You may remember all the big New Years Eve shows that got cancelled due to ridiculous ticket prices and apathy (see editorial review for possible reasons). Despite all that, Billy Joel's Madison Square Garden gig was on! Billy is currently getting into classical music, which explains the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony open. He even plays a little of what he's been working on throughout the two-CD set – encompassing Mr. Joel's incredible musical legacy. A virtual "best of live" with some choice B-sides such as "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant" and "Prelude/Angry Young Man," as well as cover tunes including the Stones' "Honky Tonk Women" and Sly Stone's "Dance to the Music." Billy's voice is showing the signs of roadwear. And he has a habit of changing melody lines and back singing phrases. As much as I like this Piano Man's music (by the way, "Piano Man" is MIA on here), it sounds as if he's going through the motions. BJ fans will scoop this up anyway. Casual fans, you probably have all three greatest hits. It'll do.

RATING 7.9/10.0

**GOV'T MULE – LIFE BEFORE INSANITY (Capricorn)** Classic rock lives in this modern-day three-piece Cream wannabe group featuring a former Allman Brothers alumnus. This offering finds these mules kicking like Van Halen during the Sammy Hagar era. Long songs that change midway through, or endlessly vamp on and on and on. The first thing that strikes me is the amount of singing on this CD and the lack of guitar solos! Go figure... The first single, "Bad Little Doggie," is so close to ZZ Top's "Just Got Paid" that they should pay royalties to the Texas trio! Other highlights include the rockin' "I Think You Know What I Mean." But the best song on the whole collection is the bonus seven-minute track! A southern rock slide guitar ditty that kicks maximum butt! There's no new ground here, but it's great to know that the classic rock sound tradition carries on.

RATING 8.3/10.0

**SUPERGRASS – SUPERGRASS (Island)** One great song does not a CD make. This three-piece band is case in point! I got suckered with their cute video for "Pumping on Your Stereo," an awesome nod to the 70's glam rock sound. So, I decided to investigate and hope for more gems on their release. BIG MISTAKE! The rest is boring, meandering, meaningless crap, for lack of a better word. How they got major label interest is beyond me. Ben Harper syndrome strikes again!

RATING 3.3/10.0

**BOY GENIUS – LAST GRAND EXPERIMENT (Tommy Boy)** Released in '98, this disc is worth the effort to buy! Alternative fun rock in the vein of Green Day and Offspring. Ear candy riffs that stick around and sing-along choruses. The lyrics are a hoot too. The lead singer singing about his girlfriend being in love with another group other than his (Superdrag) is hilarious. Song speeds go from fast to faster. It's a shame these geniuses haven't risen above some of the other groups out there today. Try this experiment. It's worth it!

RATING 8.7/10.0

**BUCHANAN & GOODMAN – POLITICALLY CORRECT? (Lunartick Records)**

Here's an artist that deserves a Behind the Music episode. Bill Buchanan and the one and only Dickie Goodman. Like Weird Al Yankovic, they were able to make a career in the field of novelty recordings – with no equal. Over thirty years of "break-in recordings." The premise: to interrupt a broadcast using excerpts from actual songs that were popular. In essence, the first artists to sample! And nobody was better than Buchanan and Goodman! Their first recording "Flying Saucer (Parts 1 & 2)" was released in 1956 and reached number seven on the charts! Their comic timing was not the best, and some of the gags were pretty stale, but when it's on, it's on! In '59, Bill and Dickie went their separate ways, with both doing their own break-in recordings to various degrees of success. Most will remember Dickie Goodman's famous "Mr. Jaws" in 1975 as well as his many political recordings during the Nixon administration in the early 70's. He was topical as well as controversial. But sadly, in 1989, Dickie Goodman fell into a severe depression and committed suicide. Gone but not forgotten, Lunartick Records has released a complete compilation of 57 of B&G's classic skits on two CD's. I saw this collection for 25 bucks back in '96 and passed. Then I saw it this summer in the cut-outs for seven bucks! Sold! Some of these recordings sound like they were transferred from vinyl, and some sound slower than the original. Especially "Kong" and "Mr. Jaws." Fatigue sets in if you listen to too many at one sitting. But it's interesting to hear how popular music changed, while their delivery didn't. TV shows, movies, popular icons, politicians...nothing was sacred. A part of my childhood memories. I still have some of Dickie's 45's and two albums. But this is the motherload! An eclectic choice for any collection. BUY OR DIE!!!

RATING 9.3/10.0

## **CONCERTS CONCERTS CONCERTS CONCERTS CONCERTS**

Since I was catching more concerts than I was giving last summer, I'll try to give a Reader's Digest version – with a big commentary at the end. Here we go...

**KISS/TED NUGENT/SKID ROW @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 5/26/00 AND ERIE CIVIC CENTER, ERIE, PA 6/19/00**

Ever since KISS announced that this would be their final farewell tour, I knew that I had to see them as many times as possible. One of the last great rock and roll extravaganzas was kissing away the makeup...on their terms. As Paul Stanley has stated, it's better to have fans say, "Why are you quitting?" instead of "When are you quitting?"

First things first, Skid Row...sorry. Without Sebastian Bach, it just doesn't sound quite the same. This new guy is more of a screecher, not a screamer like Bach. To their credit, they stuck to playing the hits.

I've heard many concert stories about Sweaty Teddy, and without a doubt, KISS made a good choice in opener. (Initially, Gene Simmons wanted Cheap Trick, but their management thought it would be a bad thing!) Uncle Ted comes from the same school of thought as KISS – entertain as well as perform! Streamlining his band to three-piece works, especially since he has drum god Tommy Aldridge from Pat Travers and Whitesnake fame. Tommy never ceased to amaze me...arms flailing, double bass assaults, and he still has the big hair!

Then there's TED! Clean-shaven, slender, and still playing sweet s\*\*t on his guitar. Another wise decision to stick to the favorites including "Stormtroopin," "Dog Eat Dog," "Free For All," "Cat Scratch Fever," "Stranglehold" and the showstopper "Great White Buffalo" – featuring Indian headdress with guitar sacrifice via bow and arrow at the end! Then there's the witty side of Ted. Mister Conservative expressed his discontent for the government with the rousing "Kiss My Ass." But best of all, Ted proudly proclaimed being 51 years clean and sober! He then proceeded to claim that it was more than what he could say for the "stupid ass motherf\*\*kers on the lawn! Bravo Ted! It amazes me that people spend their hard-earned dough for a show, only to drink and get stoned to the point of being too messed up to remember the show, let alone remember how much of a jerk they were to those sitting or standing around them! End of soapbox for now...

Then the moment of glory. KISS in all its splendor! From the opening chords of "Detroit Rock City" to the final bomb of "Rock & Roll All Nite," it was a show not to be missed. A few surprises were included this time from the 80's era – "Lick It Up," "Heaven's On Fire," "I Love It Loud," and the beginning verse of "I Still Love You" during "Black Diamond."

While Pittsburgh had 15,000 screaming fans, Erie Civic Center sold out at 11 thousand! Even though it was a much smaller venue, there was something in the air. Erie was pumped and ready for this one. It even caught the band by surprise. What caught me by surprise was Ace. I hate to spread rumors, but I think the man may be back on the sauce, and I don't mean tartar. He missed a cur in the beginning of a song, which prompted Paul Stanley to stall onstage. Then, during Ace's solo, he dropped the "F" word. Now if Ted DOESN'T say the "F" word, something's wrong! When KISS says it, something's definitely wrong! I hope the rest of the guys can sober him up enough to finish the tour with dignity. The leads were a little sloppy in spots.

But something special happened at that Erie concert that made the entire night. By now, most people know that during "Love Gun" Paul swings out to a mini platform in the back of the hall. Well, Da Girl and I were sitting RIGHT BESIDE THE PLATFORM in the end seats! We knew it was coming up, and the security guard was very lax, so we calmly scooted over. Then it happened. Imagine being the KISS fans that we are, to look straight up at Paul Stanley – only three feet or less away from us! Well, near the end of the song, the starfaced one is tossing out guitar picks before he hitches his ride back to the stage. There's just one pick left. Da Girl decides at this point to get his attention in a language that he understands. She screams "HEY, PAUL," and proceeds to "flash the goods." Paul, being the gentleman that he is, flicks the last pick with great aim, and Da Girl catches the pick the natural way. It's true! It's true!

Well, that is it. I can only wait until Mercury decides to release Alive IV, hopefully on DVD too! One last KISS goodbye. That is, until their shows without the makeup...



### **JIMMY PAGE & THE BLACK CROWES @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 6/28/00**

Imagine my surprise that J.P. was also at this show! Of course, I found out the next day. At any rate, I know that he will give a full report on the festivities, so I'll abbreviate.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd opened up with a rousing blues-based set that skipped his first, and to this date, biggest hit "Born With A Broken Heart." Not a smart move, but he made up for it with a smokin' version of Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile."

Onto Jimmy Page with the Black Crowes. I figured that since they were promoting a live CD set that could only be purchased at the time on the web, and since it featured only Led Zeppelin songs, that the night would consist of may Zoso classics featuring Chris Robinson's lemon-squeezing vocals. Well, that's about ALL they did! "Remedy" and "She Talks To Angels" were it from the Crowes selection! Bad, bad mistake! I discovered the next day that the Crowes were protesting against their record label Sony...which is mad because the band did not include any of their own hits on the live release. So who pays the price? Why, the FANS, of course! Petty and pathetic! Yes, they did an amazing job recreating the songs. But would it kill them to throw in "Jealous Again?" End of soapbox...

Jimmy Page seemed to enjoy his role as lead guitarist...smiling and playing up to Chris' Jagger swagger. The choice of Zep tunes were intriguing as well. Will Plant, Page and John Paul ever get back together? It's been a long time since they rock and rolled...

### **THE WHO @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 6/29/00**

Jimmy Crowes may have let me down the previous night, but I knew that the Who would not disappoint me this night! This makes the third time I've seen these British rock icons. I was hoping for a "best of" night, but I figured they'd throw in a few curve balls to amuse themselves.

First off, there was an opening band – The Unamericans. However, it poured down rain the whole time, soe Monte Erwin (Felony In Progress) and I kept company under the smoking tent with everybody else who waited. When the clouds parted, a double rainbow appeared. A good sign.

The evening started with a no-brainer – "I Can't Explain," followed by "Substitute," "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere"...and then the curve ball..."Don't Even Know Myself" and "My Wife" (sung by the always stagnant John Entwistle). Then the kicker: "Baba O'Reilly!" Goosebumps...Backed only by Ringo's son Zack Starkey on the drums and a keyboardist, the band displayed the chops, along with the phenom vocals of Roger Daltrey. How does that man sing like that after all these years? What was puzzling was the mic hogging from Pete Townshend who played M.C. for the evening. Roger certainly doesn't strike me as the Quiet One.

Guitar windmills, mic swinging, it was still intact. No guitar smashing. That's ok. The only downer was "Magic Bus" which not only was played differently, but it went on for over ten minutes. That could have been time well spent playing "See Me Feel Me" (MIA) or "Summertime Blues" (MIA). The show ended with the bombastic "Won't Get Fooled Again"...with "The Kids Are Alright," "Let's See Action," and M-m-m-m-"My Generation" at the rear. Overall, another killer show from The Who. You better you bet!

### **STEELY DAN @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 7/2/00**

Crowes on Wednesday; The Who on Thursday; and now Steely Dan on Sunday! Whew! I should have pitched a tent at the parking lot!

No opening act this night. Just Dan, the whole Dan, and nothing but the Dan!

Before I begin, let me say that three of their biggest hits were MIA this night – “Rikki Don’t Lose That Number,” “Reelin’ In The Years” and “Do It Again!” Another example of alienating the fans who’ve waited years to see and hear it in concert (since they were mostly a studio group to begin with)! The evening began casually with an obscure album cut “Boston Rag.” Why? What two or three people did they impress with that song? “Bodhisattva” was next. Smart move. Fagan and Becker were flanked with a tight-knit group of crack r&b/soul musicians and singers. Donald still has the pipes, but he’s an ugly SOB! Not one to just repeat the songs live, the group took liberties with solos. “Hey Nineteen” closed the first set, only to open with a Henry Mancini instrumental “Hank’s Pad” for the second! What the hell is going on here? Yet another example of fan abuse! I was not the only one who noticed this. On the way home, people called into the Pittsburgh rock station to complain about the song selection. Not a total Royal Scam, since I didn’t pay for my ticket, but they won’t take me alive next time!

### **GO-GO’S/B-52’S/PSYCHEDELIC FURS @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 7/8/00**

Before you laugh, let me explain. I got these tickets free, I had nothing else to do, so I convinced Da Girl to go with me.

The Furs were mixed horribly. Nuff said.

Next up, the B-52’s... Now I hope you’ll still respect me as a reviewer, but the B-52’s stole the show! All I can say is Fred Schneider rocks! In fact, the entire band was tight (no pun intended). Plus, they stuck to playing just the hits! Thank goodness SOME BAND GETS IT! I walked away with a new found respect and will probably buy this Athens band’s old stuff when I find it in the used section.

Then, there’s the Go-Go’s. Jane Wiedlin was taking swigs of beer; Gina Schock was puffing between each song (to which Jane started a chant-along “OK everybody! On the count of three say GINA STOP SMOKING!” It’s true...it’s true...); and Belinda Carlisle forgot words. What’s worse, they played a bunch of new songs. Jane asked the crowd to pretend that it was 1983 again, and to pretend that we had heard these songs over and over before and to like them! AAAHHHHH! It’s not ’83, and no, you’re not gonna have another hit!!!! (Please read my editorial.) My ears are sealed after this!

### **CHEAP TRICK @ I.C. LIGHT AMPHITHEATER, STATION SQUARE, PITTSBURGH, PA 7/21/00**

I’d been waiting for this show. The last time I saw this band was 1983 at Clarion University. I’ve always been a Cheap Trick fan...through the hits, the misses, the cheesy ballads, all of it.

This time they were hosting a free show at the wing-off at the Amphitheater. Some wing-off...four lousy booths! But, it was the music that I wanted.

I caught the very end of Ashes to Ashes’ set. I promise to see these mullet heads soon.

Then, former Urge Overkill guitarist and singer Nash Kato hit the stage with a retro classic rock sound and look with his white bellbottoms. Of course, no “Sister Havana” or “Girl You’ll Be a Woman Soon.” Mostly new stuff that didn’t quite sink in. However, he did a rocking version of Steely Dan’s “Dirty Work!”

It was during the break after Kato that I tried to get my Cheap Trick boxed set signed. Guess what? Cheap Trick’s Tom Petersson was just sitting in front of the back stage area – talking with fans and signing autographs! Very cool! After that, it was time to find a place to watch – only five feet from the stage! The festivities got off on a good foot with “Ain’t That a Shame,” backed up with “On Top of the World”

from Heaven Tonight. The band smartly stuck to the early era songlist. Sorry, "The Flame" wasn't in attendance, but the crowd didn't seem disappointed. It was the old stuff that got the most response, including "I Want You to Want Me" (fifth song in!), "Downed," "Elo Kiddies," "Surrender," and "Dream Police" was the encore. They would have done another song, but some jerk thought it would be cool to throw what seemed to be a piece of glass that shattered – pissing off Robin Zander enough to call it quits for the evening. Why do people do this?

Guitarist Rick Nielsen stole the show with his crazy antics and crazier guitars. The coolest guitar had to be the see-through neon green guitar! Yes, he's still wearing the ballcap! Robin Zander was very expressionless, but he still has the pipes! Bun E. Carlos forever stayed in the background...steady and sharp. I happened to snatch a Rick pick without thankfully resorting to Da Girl tactics. And it was an experience to be right in the middle of the official Cheap Trick Fan Club. Rick Nielsen acknowledged their fan club and even handed out one of his guitars for one of their fans to hold! (He gave it back to a roadie, of course.) A couple even had their five-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter dressed up in Cheap Trick gear to which the band paused to look at and smile. Cheap Trick kinda reminds me of the Kinks from the 60's. Everybody remembers the Beatles and the Stones, but what about the Kinks? Then in the 70's, you had KISS and Ted Nugent, but what about Cheap Trick? Ain't THAT a shame!

## **EDITORIAL EDITORIAL EDITORIAL EDITORIAL EDITORIAL**

### **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO PLEASING AN AUDIENCE?**

After seeing all the "big name" acts and "working class" bands throughout my 35 years, I've recently noticed an ever-increasing problem. Attendance is dropping off at shows. Sure, we can blame higher ticket prices, amusement taxes, food prices, audiences acting subhuman, computer games, etc. Yeah, they're partially at fault. But recently, I've noticed an underlying problem that took a band like KISS to open my eyes, and hopefully this report will reach those who are to blame – the ARTISTS THEMSELVES!!!

KISS has always believed in giving the fans what they want, in buckets! I don't just mean in the presentation. I mean the SONG SELECTION! They're always trying to play the ideal set list. To please the most number of people – fans, casual fans, and the curious. On their farewell tour, Paul Stanley was playing a brief acoustic version of "Forever." But, it met with minimal response. So after a few shows, he dropped it and began to play "I Still Love You" to more favorable cheers. This example may not seem like a big deal, but it is!

I've played drums in bands since I was 15. I've been in country to the bone bands, variety bands, heavy metal, rock, country rock, and now a classic rock band. But it never dawned on me what was wrong until I became a deejay from '92 to '96. Musicians fear deejays, and for good reason! DEEJAYS THINK MORE LIKE THE AVERAGE LISTENER, MUSICIANS THINK MORE LIKE MUSICIANS!

Now before you musicians out there curse my name and send death threats, follow me with this, because I'm willing to bet that the average person is saying, "Finally! Someone has the guts to say this!"

Whenever I "spun the music," I always tried to play nothing but the most popular songs because that's what worked the best! The only time that I fell off my game plan was when someone got me to play something obscure. "They'll love it, Mark! Just play it!" Sure enough, people sat down. Was it smart to please that one person at the risk of alienating everyone else? No! But right after that, you can bet "Mony Mony" or something like that would reel the audience back into my good graces.

Which brings me to the main point again! Musicians think like musicians! For the musicians out there who are touting this editorial out, follow me. Most musicians believe that the average person doesn't want to hear the usual "hits." That's why they came to see and hear a band, right? **WRONG! PEOPLE LOVE THE FAMILIAR! THE GREATER THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN YOUR AUDIENCE, THE MORE FAMILIAR YOUR SONG SELECTION SHOULD BE!**

"But Mark, what kind of challenge is that? To play nothing but the hits? That's simple." **WRONG!** It is more of a challenge to find the BEST songs to play at the right time in the show! If you have a new release to promote, great! If you're with a band who had its moment of glory ten to twenty years ago, be realistic. You probably won't have another big hit. If you're going to sell CD's after the show, chances are it's going to spurn sales from your OLDER catalog! Case in point, The Go-Go's. When Jane Wiedlin has to BEG people to listen to their new stuff and to "PRETEND" to like it, there should have been lights flashing! Ding-ding-ding! Hello!

"But Mark, if I'm just playing the hits, I'm nothing more than a human jukebox! **A SELLOUT!**" **PLEEEASE!** Give me a break! Then why the heck are you on stage to begin with? None other than Michael Stipe of the quintessential "We're artsy-fartsy" band REM stated that the band sold out when they first accepted payment for a gig! **THINK ABOUT IT!**

"But Mark, I'm tired of playing 'just the hits!'" Excuse me? I feel so sad that you wrote some hit songs that changed your life, made you huge sums of money and people crawled at your feet. If my songs ever made it big, I'd play them night after night after night! There are great groups out there who would jump at the chance to do what you do, and do it better! If it makes you feel better, play a shorter version of the song, play a medley of your standards, cut out the extended solos and play more songs to keep the show moving. Jam bands, what are you going to play in twenty minutes that you can't say in two minutes? Do your experimenting at practice. Have a set plan when you reach the stage. Remember, **MUSICIANS HAVE GOT TO STOP THINKING LIKE MUSICIANS AND THINK MORE LIKE PEOPLE!**

"But Mark, what about my creativity? If I can't please myself, how can I please an audience?" **SHAME ON YOU!** When you recorded your CD in the studio, that was your creativity. The show is merely a forum to enhance those songs to your audience. Break it down: you are providing a service. Entertainment. If you don't do it right, you're going to wonder why you're not successful anymore. I guess if playing to fewer people is your goal, congratulations! You can do that. Hell, anybody can do that! If you have a new hit from the CD, great! Play it! If radio or TV isn't playing it, maybe you should rethink your strategy. Tell the audience that you have a new release in stores now and play ONE cut from it. Try to choose the song that you think will go over best. Then afterwards, mention your new CD again, but then play one of your older, most familiar songs. It shows that you're not desperate and that you have faith in the fans to make up their own minds if they want to buy or not.

"But Mark, why doesn't YOUR band practice what you preach? I don't see Felony In Progress playing every weekend!" Good point. It's the very reasons stated previously. Monte, the guitarist, is one hell of a player and performer. He's also become a good friend. The same goes for Joel, the bassist. But, here's the situation I deal with. "I don't like that song." "If we had more lights and a fog machine we'd get more gigs." "Can't we change the set list? I'm bored." "Why do you want to play a dance song? We play classic rock!" "What's wrong with having a few drinks during a gig?" Here's the one that upsets me the most: "50 percent of my playing is to please myself, the other 50 percent is to please the audience." **STOP THINKING LIKE A MUSICIAN AND THINK MORE LIKE THE AVERAGE LISTENER!**

You may think that what I say is a lot of crap. I can't blame you. Most of my comments are directed at the big name acts who are apathetic to their crowds' need to hear what they paid their hard-earned money for. **THE AUDIENCE IS NOT THERE TO SERVE YOU; YOU ARE THERE TO SERVE THEM!**

I get this argument all the time at the radio station where I work, and J.P. (D'Scribe) can vouch for this where he works, too. "Why do you guys play the same songs over and over again? Can't you play anything different?" People who say this are in the minority. Ratings prove it. Money, time and countless music tests go into picking the cream of the crop. To pick the songs that will please **THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME!** Shouldn't that be the focus of any musician who earns a living, because it is a job. Don't make it difficult for those **WHO YOU WORK FOR – YOUR AUDIENCE!**

## **NEWS FLASH NEWS FLASH NEWS FLASH NEWS FLASH**

Felony In Progress split up in August 2000. (This happened after I wrote my editorial.) Bassist/singer/leader Joel Helfand has chosen to play bass for a classic rock/jam band known as G.W.B. Guitarist Monte Erwin is currently working on his first solo recording The Monte Erwin Experience in the MAP Studios.

## **MUSIC REVIEW INVENTORY REDUCTION SALE!**

Da Boy is overstocked with tons of new CD's since last summer's reviews. What does this mean to you? It all must go! No long-winded, adjective-ridden reviews! All meat and potatoes! Read 'em while they're hot!

**DON HENLEY – INSIDE JOB (Warner Bros.)** This Eagle has landed alright...and he's hatched the bomb of 2000! Mister Mopey here tells us how unfair life is while he lives in the fast lane – give me a break! One listen was enough!

RATING 3.5/10.0

**THE BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA – VAVOOM! (Interscope)** Now that swing has swung outta here, I was hoping that Brian wouldn't have gone astray. In fact, this disc kicks maximum cool! From start to finish – the band is swinging' like there's no tomorrow! Brian's vox is in top shape, his solos are stingin,' but the fad has faded. It's a shame. The bonus two-song CD includes a hip take on Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love!" What's next for Brian? Bring back polka! RATING 9.25/10.0

**BUCCANEER – DA OPERA (VP Records)** Opera and rap!? What the Dillio? Sorry...I ain't down wit it!

RATING 2.5/10.0

**STUCK MOJO – RISING (Century Media)** Rap rock fusion that isn't too bad. And besides, the video to their song "Rising" features ex-WCW superstar Diamond Dallas Page and Raven.

RATING 7.8/10.0

**DROP ZERO – SUPER SONIC STEREO (self-produced)** Heavy-hitting rap rock that's the flavor of the month. Two standouts. 1) "Wait After Dark." This song kicks maximum stereo! I already put this song on one of my music compilation CD's. 2) "Mr. Howard Stern." Any group that glorifies the king of all media can't be that bad!

RATING 8.5/10.0

# A VIEW FROM THE DOOR

*By Sctiv D'Ump*

SUP?

It's been awhile since the last time I scribbled for this quaint little rag. The worst part is that I can't say I've been too busy. The first week of May my Harley fell on my foot and left me unable to work, walk or do much of anything for nearly two months. The only good thing I got out of this whole ordeal is the first decent tan I've had in years. Like I said, it's been awhile so I'm not going to touch on any subject that would be considered way outdated.

A couple weeks ago I attended OZZFEST 2001 at the Post Gazette Pavilion.

Was it the best OZZFEST? No. Was it the worst OZZFEST? No. Was it a day full of good friends and fun? HELL FU@#ING YEAH! See J. P's article. He'll tell you all about it.

I only have one CD review for this issue. I bet you know what it is.

**TOOL – LATERALUS.** The night to end almost five years of waiting. A release date delayed over a year. At midnite May 15th the wait would come to an end. Since I had to be the first kid on my block to own it, fellow New Pigger John Burns offered to drive my disabled ass to MIKES MOVIES and MUSIC in State College to get it. By the way kids, I would have crawled there if I had to. Anyway, shortly after midnite, John and I left the store with the new TOOL in hand. This CD is definitely TOOL, but not the band that we are used to hearing. In the past three studio albums it was not unusual to hear songs about hate, depression, homosexuality, evolution, sexual deveiance and blasphamy. You know, the reasons we like TOOL. Don't look for any of those things on this CD. Scary as it is for me to say but this latest offering is actually kind of positive. "Grudge," the first song, is about how being unable to forgive can lead to ones downfall. "Wear your grudge like a crown/and you're sinking deeper." "Eon Blue Apocalypse" and "Mantra" are instrumental-effects fillers. My favorite two songs are actually one long tune. "Parabol" and "Parabola" are or is a song that only a band like TOOL could compose. It's about the thoughts that Jesus was having as He hung on the cross. The song starts gloomy and Maynard sets the stage with his mournful lyrics. Midway through, the rest of the band join in with a chord that sets this tune into a wild ride for the ears and mind. "Parabola" is full of the usual TOOL earthshaking bass and drum lines, tricky time changes, genius guitar work and lyrics that are on another plane. Among other songs are the radio friendly "Schism," "The Patient," "Disposition" and "Lateralis." We can't forget about another TOOL staple. THE HIDDEN TRACK. It is an excerpt from the Art Bell radio show. Trust me, it's weird. Five years is a long time to wait for a band to put out an album. True, TOOL had to survive legal battles and their front man recording and touring with a side project. Hopefully, this will make them a stronger band. It is apparent that they are a more mature band. For me, is Lateralus worth a nearly five year wait? YES. BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.9/10.0

There you have it. Till next issue.....

## BEER TROUBLESHOOTING

***Submitted by Farley Featherfoot***

SYMPTOM: Feet cold and wet.  
FAULT: Glass being held at incorrect angle.  
ACTION: Rotate glass so that open end points toward ceiling.

SYMPTOM: Feet warm and wet.  
FAULT: Improper bladder control.  
ACTION: Stand next to nearest dog, complain about house training.

SYMPTOM: Beer unusually pale and tasteless.  
FAULT: Glass empty.  
ACTION: Get someone to buy you another beer.

SYMPTOM: Opposite wall covered with fluorescent lights.  
FAULT: You have fallen over backward.  
ACTION: Have yourself chained to bar.

SYMPTOM: Mouth contains cigarette butts.  
FAULT: You have fallen forward.  
ACTION: See above.

SYMPTOM: Beer tasteless, front of your shirt is wet.  
FAULT: Mouth not open, or glass applied to wrong part of face.  
ACTION: Retire to restroom, practice in mirror.

SYMPTOM: Floor blurred.  
FAULT: You are looking through bottom of empty glass.  
ACTION: Get someone to buy you another beer.

SYMPTOM: Floor moving.  
FAULT: You are being carried out.  
ACTION: Find out if you are being taken to another bar.

SYMPTOM: Room seems unusually dark.  
FAULT: Bar has closed.  
ACTION: Confirm home address with bartender, take taxi home.

SYMPTOM: Truck suddenly takes on colorful aspect and textures.  
FAULT: Beer consumption has exceeded personal limitations.  
ACTION: Cover mouth.

SYMPTOM: Everyone looks up to you and laughs.

FAULT: You are dancing on the table.  
ACTION: Fall on somebody cushy looking.

SYMPTOM: Beer is crystal clear.  
FAULT: It's water. Somebody is trying to sober you up.  
ACTION: Punch him.

SYMPTOM: Hands hurt, nose hurts, mind unusually clear.  
FAULT: You have been in a fight.  
ACTION: Apologize to everyone you see, just in case it was them.

SYMPTOM: Don't recognize anyone, don't recognize the room you're in.  
FAULT: You've wandered into the wrong party.  
ACTION: See if they have free beer.

SYMPTOM: Your singing sounds distorted.  
FAULT: The beer is too weak.  
ACTION: Have more beer until your voice improves.

SYMPTOM: Don't remember the words to the song.  
FAULT: Beer is just right.  
ACTION: Play air guitar.

SYMPTOM: Cold and unable to unlock door to hotel room.  
FAULT: Woke up in hotel room, got up to go to bathroom and chose wrong door.  
ACTION: Knock loudly on door to wake sleeping wife. If this fails, find hotel worker to unlock door for you.

## **MILLENIUM MUSIC CONFERENCE 2001**

*Recap by D'Scribe*

From its beginnings five years ago, the annual Millenium Music Conference in Harrisburg has become one of the biggest weekends of the year for this state's music scene, as the music industry converges on Harrisburg for four days to network, perform, learn, converse, and get on the same page regarding the state of the music business and each person's role in it. Once again, yours truly and The Final Cut took part in this year's event, which took place Feb. 15-17 at the Harrisburg Hilton and Towers.

### **DAY ONE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15**

This was a crazy day for me. My boss at Q94, Adam, informed me earlier in the week that Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks would be stopping by the Q94 studios this day to talk about his new band, Frogwings, and his new indy label, Flying Frog Records. I had planned to leave Altoona for Harrisburg and Millenium at 4 PM.



Butch's expected arrival at the station for the interview: 3:30 PM. Something told me this schedule arrangement wasn't going to work out quite as planned. Strangulation of my boss was under serious consideration.

Butch Trucks showed up around 3:30, but was on the cell phone outside the station front door until...ulp...3:50 PM. But I did get to interview him on the air, and the interview wrapped up at around 4:10 PM. And Butch had to be in Hagerstown, Maryland that evening for another interview, so he couldn't stick around. So after a few photos and autographs, Butch was on his way out of town, and by 4:30, so was I.



**LEFT TO RIGHT: Dan McConnell, Felix Kos, Butch Trucks & D'Scribe**

My boss, Adam, turned from goat to hero in the course of two hours. He suggested I take the PA Turnpike to the Route 15 exit near Carlisle, and take 15 north through Camp Hill to Harrisburg. Adam was right, it was quicker, and I arrived at the Hilton at around 7 PM, per my original itinerary. Hell, I would have bought Adam a beer had he been there!

I parked my jalopy and checked in to my hotel room, no hassles at the front desk unlike last year. I ran into Spinebelt's manager, Dan Kelly, and conversed with him for a few minutes, and waited for about 20 minutes to see if any of my Pennsylvania Musician cohorts might show up. When they didn't, I decided to head out in search of my first showcase gig of this Millenium...

### **SHAKEYS, HERSHEY, PA, FEBRUARY 15**

Slowly, I am starting to learn my way around the roads of Harrisburg. Each time I make the trip there, I become a little better acquainted. Fortunately, among the limited number of Millenium showcases happening this night was the five-band showcase at Shakey's in Hershey, a venue I had driven to during past Milleniums. I entered Shakey's and quickly procured a table near the stage and ordered wings. As most of the conference attendees hadn't yet arrived in town, there wasn't much of a crowd here early on.

I entered as the first band of the night, Poker Face, was already on stage. I already owned one of this group's albums, Next, and was looking forward to seeing these guys live to see what they brought to the table. Poker Face does politically charged yet melodic modern rock, led by singer and songwriter Paul Topete. Paul has issues, especially regarding the deterioration of our rights and freedoms through gun control, censorship and other governmental restraints. He sang every song with fire and passion on Shakey's stage this night; you knew this guy believed in his words. I didn't catch many titles of the six songs I saw Poker Face do, except for

"Reefer Madness" and "I Can See It In Your Eyes." Paul's voice rang out crisp and clear, and the rest of Poker Face – bassist Dennis Beidler, guitarist Brett Griffiths and drummer Howie Dean – backed him with a tight and powerful wall of sound. This group's melodies and harmonies were crisp, and the songs had direction to them. Poker Face played this set with conviction; too bad there weren't more people around to witness them. According to Paul, Poker Face is presently working on their fourth album, to be released later this year.



#### **Poker Face.**

The second band up this night was Happenstance. I first saw these guys perform an excellent set last November at the Pennsylvania Musician-sponsored Christmas for Kids Salvation Army benefit concert at D'Alexanders in Lebanon. As they did during that performance, Happenstance played a progressive brand of rock rooted in Kansas, Styx and Dream Theater. Technically-involved songs with frequent chord and tempo shifts and detailed melodies were the norm for Happenstance's original songs like "Things As They Are," "Seeing Is Believing" and the new "Silent Strength;" yet as busy as these songs were, Happenstance incorporated a strong, catchy hook into each one. Along the way, the group also broke out a few choice cover songs during this set, including Aerosmith's new "Angel's Eye" from the Charlie's Angels movie soundtrack; also Kiss' "Heaven's On Fire" and Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It." Talent-wise these guys were top-notch – singer Shawn Heim showed incredible power, presence and range on the vocal end, and also displayed precision and flare on keys. Drummer Mike Radka delivered a full-scale assault behind his drum kit, complete with complex rudiments and double-kick bass drum thunder. As they did in Lebanon last November, Happenstance again left me with lower jaw brushing the floor in amazement from their technical ecstasy. If they ever get over towards 'Toona way, you owe yourself the treat of checking this band out!



### **Happenstance.**

More fans and Millenium attendees began to matriculate their way into the audience, Balistic made their way onto Shakey's stage. As with Happenstance before them, I had last seen Balistic at the aforementioned Salvation Army benefit show at D'Alexanders last November. I was impressed by the aggressive leanings of the group's new material introduced at that show, and wanted to hear Balistic's further progress during this showcase set. Balistic did numerous new songs during this set, including "The Land of the Living," "Sacrificed," "Psychic Man," "The Darkness," "Right Where You Want Me," "Into The Gray," "Gently" and more. Balistic's sound has taken on a more progressive and aggressive lean, with a newfound sense of urgency and faster tempos, and a few Maiden-ish instrumental breaks along the way. Balistic singer/bassist/songwriter/all-around-ringleader Dave Fox has become more of a presence front and center onstage as well. His baritone-ish singing voice possesses an almost gothic quality, yet Dave can step up the agitation and aggression where needed. In between songs, Dave calmly addressed the audience to introduce and offer perspective on each song. The rest of Balistic – guitarist Brian Kneasel, rhythm guitarist Mike Bordner and drummer John Lohman – provided a stern metallic backdrop to Dave's vocals, tightly and swiftly gearshifting tempos and chord changes as the course of each song dictated. Balistic met with steady and constant applause after each song from the growing Shakey's audience, and theirs too was another impressive showcase performance.

The Ashes to Ashes contingent arrived during Balistic's set, and touched base with me to see what was up. Bassist Ed Beeler informed me that Ashes to Ashes would be opening for Yngwie Malmsteen and Lizzy Borden at the Beehive in Pittsburgh in April (we would later learn that Yngwie didn't want to share his stage with local talent, and dumped Ashes from the bill). I also met one of the members of the entourage for Baltimore-based Hyper Chyld, who was up next on the bill – guitarist Rock's mother, Gail, was along to see her son and his band in action.

Hyper Chyld soon took the stage, and again here was a talented yet unique band. Hyper Chyld's base sound was song-oriented modern groove-metal, combining hard-edged grooves with strong melodies and oceanic arrangements. Singer Jamie Sadler demonstrated a high-flying voice and a powerful stage presence as he sent these tunes soaring skyward. Lead guitarist Rock Huddleston provided axe histrionics that helped shape each tune and support the overall effect of each song, while rhythm guitarist Mike Garrett, bassist Brian Gulin and drummer Doug Craig powered each

song with full, layered rhythms. Hyper Chyld did songs from their debut CD Flesh Burns Desire such as "Come To Life;" and introduced newer numbers such as "Innocent The Sky." I came away impressed with my first look at Hyper Chyld – as with the other bands on this showcase bill, they also were distinct in style and approach. And like the other bands on this bill, they deserved a bigger audience than this light opening night crowd at Shakey's.



### **Hyper Chyld.**

During the intermission, the contingent from Millenium radio sponsor 105.7 The X arrived at Shakey's, including popular X announcer Jen Shade. Jen was here for a reason – to introduce the final band of this showcase, 'Burgh power trio Ashes to Ashes.

It had been a year-and-a-half since I last saw Ashes To Ashes, opening for Sammy Hagar at I.C. Light Amphitheater in Pittsburgh. Between then and now, Ashes had unveiled their fifth CD, Big Moving Parts. As this new album relied more on electronics and technology than past Ashes output, I was curious to see how these guys would pull the songs off on the live stage. I got at least a partial answer during this set, as Ashes to Ashes did a few songs from the album – "Darkside," "Times Ten," "Underground," and "Maybe You Kill." Singer/guitarist Andy Bell, bassist/singer Ed Beeler and drummer Dave Campbell didn't sweat the details of reproducing technology onstage for these songs, they simply played the songs as flat-out guitar rock, just like the rest of their catalog. Ashes To Ashes gave a charged performance all the way through this set, mixing the new songs with highlights of their past discography such as "Radio Red," "86," "The Ride," "Wear You Out," their remake of Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation" and of course, the ever-popular "Eat Me, I'm A Hoagie." Ashes To Ashes turned out to be a fitting closer for this showcase bill – they displayed the most energy and urgency this night, generating a faster tempo and barely pausing to breathe between songs. A few loyal Pittsburgh fans who apparently made the roadtrip to see Ashes jumped and lightly moshed in front of the band at stagefront.



### **Ashes To Ashes.**

This was a good showcase to help kick off Millenium weekend, as I saw five good bands – all rocking but diverse in their style and sound.

There was just one negative during this showcase for me - the viewfinder on my Advantix camera popped out of the camera and onto the Shakey's floor sometime during Balistic's set, making it very difficult for me to properly frame my attempted "Hot Shot" photos. I attempted some makeshift repairs during the course of the night, but to no avail. I needed a working camera for the remainder of Millenium weekend, and my afflicted Advantix just wasn't going to cut it. Fortunately, en route back to the Hilton from Shakey's, I discovered a Walmart and purchased a replacement camera – at 2:30 in the morning! The lady behind the counter appeared a little perplexed as to why she was selling a \$40 camera at this time of the morning.

### **DAY TWO: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

The preceding night's showcases were the warm-up - the main event kicked into gear this day...the trade show, the schmoozing, the seminars, the schmoozing, the performances on the X stage, the schmoozing, the hospitality parties, the schmoozing, the evening showcases...did I mention the schmoozing? Much was argued on several local music message boards in the weeks preceding Millenium about the high-profile showcases, which bands and artists were playing them, and the likelihood of the important music industry heads at the conference seeing some bands and not seeing others. In my view, a lot of it boiled down to...schmoozing. Those bands and artists (or their managers and publicists, as the case may be) who made the extra effort to meet and greet as many music industry folks as they could find at this conference stood the best chance of seeing some of these folks at their showcases. Some groups even started their effort weeks before by sending mailers and e-mail invites to music industry folks scheduled to be at Millenium. The band "wallflowers" who shied away and didn't network...likely were not seen by these folks. One of Millenium's best lessons each year is developing the fine art of networking – meeting all the music industry contacts that you can. Much of that networking takes place in the Hilton mezzanine, where the trade show takes place. It is a trade show, yes – but it is even more a network and schmooze show. Bands and musicians pressing the flesh like politicians during election year, shaking hands, swapping business cards, handing out demos and CD-R's, flyers, schedules and even

stickers and other merchandise. The trade show floor is where you'll find the heart and soul of Millenium. It is where the real action, the wheeling and dealing, take place. As I arrived on the trade show floor shortly after 10 AM, it was on...the earlybirds were already present at this rock music industry bazaar, pressing the flesh and shaking as many hands as they could find. As I arrived at the Pennsylvania Musician table, editor Robin Noll and Shel Hoachlander were already entertaining visitors, from musicians to other music industry folks making the trade show rounds. Some were there to swap business cards and establish contact with the magazine; others were there to mooch free Hershey kisses and other candy available in a large dish on the table.

I stuck around the Pennsylvania Musician table and greeted visitors for a while, as more and more bands made their arrival at the conference. The Negative Space, Spinebelt, Bead (Dead Leaves), Julian Fist and Halestorm contingents all made their entrances to the trade show floor. Michael Reich, carrying his guitar case, stopped by to chat briefly. Darcie Miner's manager, Ricky Leigh Mensch (who is also vice president of music trade publication Hits Magazine) stopped by and introduced himself. I recognized other faces, such as Jim Speese of Cloud Party, Dave Fox of Balistic, and other musicians and music-related people too numerous to mention by name. The Millenium Trade Floor was quickly becoming a busy place.



**Robin Noll & Andrea Greene staffing the Pennsylvania Musician table.**

Eventually, the clock struck one, and the various panels, seminars and business sessions were ready to get under way. The first one I decided to check out was "Music Business 101," a quick introductory course to the players and playing field of the music business, and what bands and musicians need to know as they get started. This panel featured six music industry professionals: moderator Paul Sacksman, publisher of the Musician's Atlas; John T. Robertson Jr. of Legal-Guys.com, Dick Gabriel of the American Federation of Musicians, Joe Guzik of Columbia Records, Mark Houlihen of Leverage Art, and Robert D. Litowitz, Esq. of Finnegan-Henderson et al.

Paul led off the discussion by explaining that the panel would try to give the audience a crash course in the music business during the time allotted, and he opened the floor to questions from the audience.

One topic discussed early on was copyrighting, and the importance of artists protecting the music they create. Rob advised the audience to record their songs and register them with the copyright office. Dick added that it was important, in a group situation, for the musicians involved to determine the songwriting credits early, to avoid royalty hassles and disputes later on.

On the topic of live performing, artists were advised to get show agreements on paper whenever possible; also to be prepared before hitting the live stage. Paul added that it was important for artists to constantly think on their feet; to be able to capitalize on opportunities that might surface.

Musicians were also told that developing the buzz about their bands and music was in their hands – a.k.a. do your own marketing and promotion, and do not rely on club owners and the media to build your buzz for you.

On the topic of band management, the audience was told that a band manager should be passionate about the band he/she represents, and that agreements about the manager's compensation should be on paper.

As the discussion approached its time limit, several pieces of advice were offered in closing. It all begins with the song, and the music should always be first and foremost. Musicians should strive to control their own careers as much as possible. Bands just getting started should get their group name registered. Marketing tips included establishing street teams to spread the word about your band, and the use of internet mailing lists to e-mail reminders, upcoming shows and other updates to fans.

The next panel I checked out was "How Can My Song Rock Your World," presented by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, Inc. (NARAS). Panelists here included moderator Mark Schulz of NARAS; producer David Ivory of Ivory Productions; A&R person Marcy Rauer; Barry Fox of The Patriot News Co., and three radio station music/program directors – Lenny Diana of WXDX "The X" in Pittsburgh, Nixon of WQXA "The X" in Hershey, and Chris James of WTPA in Harrisburg.

The premise of this seminar was pretty simple – how does a song catch the attention of the music industry people who can make that song a hit? Each panelist related a different factor that made the difference, from a 'gut feeling' about a particular song to the promo pack and package that presents the song, to the marketing by the band to get that song noticed. Through the course of the discussion, a few strong themes were established for getting a song noticed. First and foremost, the song itself has to be good – OBVIOUSLY! But beyond that, the song has to be presented well. It should be RECORDED well – according to David, it is wiser for musicians to invest their money and studio time into recording one good song very well, rather than investing money and that same studio time into recording five songs with rushed and lesser quality. Other bits of advice included positioning your strongest song material first on a CD so it is heard first, and the ingredients for a solid overall promo pack and presentation. It ultimately boils down to a strong song, yes, but it also boils down to the artist's ability to present that song in a manner that it gets noticed from the rest of the pack.

There seemed to be less of an emphasis on radio this year in the panel discussions; the panel I had appeared on in past Milleniums, discussing college radio and homegrown radio shows, transformed into a forum totally on college radio and college gigs. So I didn't get to panel this year, bummer...

Which meant I had more time this year to do something I didn't get to do much at last year's Millenium – pay a visit to the 105.7 X sound stage, off from the main

trade show floor. Here bands registered for Millenium could sign up for 15-minute blocks of time to perform a few songs and plug their showcase gigs during Millenium weekend. The X was also broadcasting live from this location the entire weekend, so several lucky bands were able to perform live on the air as part of the remote broadcast. I showed up just in time to watch Julian Fist perform two songs unplugged – “Fly Away” and “I’ll Run Away.” (At press time, “Fly Away” – off Julian Fist’s new album, Pushing Audio Platinum – is in regular rotation on the X’s playlist.)



**Julian Fist unplugged.**

After this point, I was starting to think about...food. Shel, Troy Logan and I headed for the Hilton’s Raspberries restaurant, located on the basement floor. It turned out that the restaurant’s evening dinner buffet wasn’t open until 4 pm, so we sat in the nextdoor lounge and shot the breeze with two members of the contingent from York-based metalheads Bullet, guitarist Jason and manager Charles Kern.

Eventually the buffet did open and we did grub out, after which we returned to the Pennsylvania Musician table at the Trade Show. I discovered some of my ‘homies’ had arrived, as the Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys contingent was checking in with Robin and getting acclimated with the Millenium surroundings. After hanging out at the Trade Show a short while, I headed back to my hotel room and prepared for the evening’s showcases...

### **THE HILTON HARRISBURG & TOWERS, HARRISBURG; THE GINGERBREAD MAN, MECHANICSBURG; & THE MIDTOWN TAVERN, HARRISBURG, FEBRUARY 16**

Every year at Millenium, that same dilemma always rears its head – what showcases do I go to check out? What bands do I go to see, and which ones will I end up missing? This particular evening, I had several I wanted to see, but they were scattered around the area, and some were playing at the same time. So some hard choices had to be made. This was compounded by my determination that I was going to see at least a few new faces this year, and a few new rooms I hadn’t been to before. So as this evening’s showcases unfolded, I found myself adopting the role of roving reporter...

But at least early on, I stuck to the Hilton... Darcie Miner was one of the “buzz” names at Millenium – everyone and their brother was talking about this teenaged singer/songwriter, and the buzz was that she was an imminent threat to sign a recording deal. (And in the months since, she has inked a deal with Beyond Music.)



Since she was first onstage at the Hilton this night, I figured I'd catch her set and see what the buzz was all about.

Darcie performed at least a couple of showcases at this year's Millenium, and this one was with her full band. Backed by drummer Chris Heilig, bassist Milhouse and guitarist Ryan, Darcie sang several songs from her debut CD Down to Earth such as "Falling Apart," "He Said" and "Benjamin;" also a version of Patty Griffin's "I Write The Book" and a few other songs. Almost instantly I recognized that Darcie had a knack for song hooks, and her voice sounded clear, clean and concise during this set. She appeared a little shy when talking to the audience, but her mood was nonetheless happy and festive, and it showed in her performance. The Hilton this night was an all ages venue, so a number of under-21-aged fans sat cross-legged at stagefront, with the over-21 crowd observing from behind the partitioned-off stagefront area. For my first time witnessing Darcie Miner, I was impressed by her talent – and I now knew what the buzz was about.



**Darcie Miner and her band.**

Before the next band, Aztek Trip, took to the stage, I met Geoff Hamer and Kenny Play, the singer/guitarist and bassist respectively for the band RU21. I actually met Geoff a year or two earlier, after having just missed seeing RU21's only Altoona appearance opening for Spellbound at an empty new Sebastiano's. Geoff and Kenny politely lobbied for me to come check out their showcase set later that evening at the Midtown Tavern. It wasn't in my initial game plan, but the "guilt trip" thing was at work because of my having missed their only show to date in my neck of the woods, and I decided that I might try to catch RU21's set later on...

But for the moment, it was time to check out one of the Lehigh Valley's most talked-about bands, Aztek Trip. A four-piece, Aztek Trip's base sound was pop-edged modern rock. The group displayed some energy, and a knack for song hooks. I didn't catch too many song titles, but two songs they did perform were "Average Day" and "Shattered" (not the Rolling Stones classic). What I saw of Aztek Trip was an energetic, workmanlike set, though without a whole lot of crowd interaction or communication with the audience.



### **Aztek Trip.**

My game plan was to go catch Sterling Koch's new blues-rock trio, V.I.H., at the Gingerbread Man in Mechanicsburg, so I left the Hilton midway through Aztek Trip's set so I could arrive in time. I had never driven in Mechanicsburg before, nor did I have the foggiest idea where the Gingerbread Man was aside from the map inside the Millenium program, but I was determined to learn more about the Harrisburg area during this weekend, and damn, I was going to find the place!

The good news, I easily found the Gingerbread Man. The bad news, I couldn't easily find a parking space. So after two trips around the block, a space did open up, and I went inside the Gingerbread Man to check out the showcase happening there.

As I entered, the Baltimore-based duo Water Planet was most of the way through their showcase set. Jim Hesser played acoustic guitar; Millie Landrum sang and played a variety of percussion instruments. Water Planet's base sound was folk with a worldbeat edge, not too far removed from some of Rusted Root's higher-profile experiments. I didn't catch any of their song titles during the four songs I witnessed, but Water Planet's music displayed Far-Eastern and Celtic vibes. I thought what Water Planet did, they did well. Unfortunately, it seemed that their music was going over the heads of most of the Gingerbread Man crowd, who seemed perplexed more than anything else. But Water Planet seemed to take it all in stride, and performed their music as best they could, leaving the audience to draw their own conclusions. For what it's worth, at least I appreciated Water Planet's uniqueness and willingness to explore musical avenues off the beaten path.

During the intermission, I was invited to come join Debtor's Mill at their table up alongside the stage. As I headed there, I passed Sterling Koch and said hello; it was the first time I had seen him in person since he played Peter C's ten years ago! I happened to be wearing Peter C's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary shirt with all the bands that had played that room listed on the back. Sterling was elated when I showed him that Big John remembered him on the back of the shirt!

Debtor's Mill set up and took the stage. When I saw Debtor's Mill at last year's Millenium, they were an electric four-piece. But now, they were a two-piece acoustic duo, founding member/singer/guitarist/songwriter Roman Murray and his new band partner, Rick Dibello. Contrary to the usual Millenium fare of original tunes, Roman and Rick did mostly acoustic cover songs from Fuel, Tonic, Creed, Beatles and 3 Doors Down; before doing the song "Lonely Garden" from the group's December's Child CD, a few new original songs (with Rick singing lead vocal on one), and then Led Zeppelin's "Over The Hills and Far Away" to conclude the set. Roman and Rick sounded very together on their acoustics, and in all, Debtor's Mill Duo delivered a solid and entertaining set.



**Debtor's Mill duo.**

The intermission between Debtor's Mill's acoustic set-up and V.I.H.'s electric gear took a little longer than the previous intermission, but soon V.I.H. was ready to go. V.I.H. – Sterling Koch on guitar and lead vocals, Frank Ciambra on bass and Larry Baudoin on drums - opened with Stevie Ray Vaughan's "The House Is Rockin,'" and immediately I knew we were in for some smoking blues rock. V.I.H. then launched into several original tunes from their forthcoming CD - "Everything I Need," "Saved My Life" and the slow and bluesy "Worried Life Blues." The trio then dug into the Canned Heat archives for "Let's Work Together," before blazing a version of the Rev. Gary Davis' "12 Gates To The City." Another song from the forthcoming CD, "Nothing Can Keep Me From You;" followed by a stirring rendition of Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody."

I liked the song selection – the original songs were catchy, hard-edged, bluesy and soulful; and the select cover songs V.I.H. chose to do were interesting and off the beaten path. On the performance end, V.I.H. were tight as a trio, with Frank and Larry's muscular rhythms laying the rock steady foundation for Sterling to do his thing on guitar and vocals. As expected, Sterling let loose on the fretboards with some amazing solowork, especially on "Worried Life Blues;" and he displayed flare on his use of floor pedals as well. In all, an impressive showing from V.I.H. (which, by the way, stands for Victory In Heaven) – impressive enough that I'll make sure I check this trio out if they schedule any shows up in our neck of the woods.



**Sterling Koch and V.I.H.**

I wanted to stick around for V.I.H.'s full set, but for me to see the other showcases I wanted to see this night, I had to leave before their set ended.

I headed back to the Hilton, where the Martini Brothers were in the midst of their high-energy set. With the crowd going nuts on the dance floor in front of them, the Martinis were partying down with their instrumental favorite "Lava Lamp." They kept the festivities going with (song from MMC2000 CD - check title!), before introducing and ending their showcase set with "Party On Wheels." At some point during this song, the band and stage crew broke out the silly string, and escalated the party to an even higher crescendo to end the set. Though I only caught three songs, the Martini Brothers obviously still put on one kickass set!

Now the scenario gets a little bit complicated...I wanted to go see RU21's showcase set at the Midtown Tavern. Although the Midtown Tavern isn't very far from the Hilton, I did not want to drive there, for several reasons. First, I understood parking wasn't the best, and that it might be difficult to get a space close to the venue. The idea of walking wouldn't bother me, except that a friend of mine – a manager for a band that showcased at the Midtown two Milleniums ago – was mugged as she walked back to her car after her band's showcase. Moral of story, the Midtown wasn't in one of Harrisburg's safer neighborhoods, and I had no desire to deal with muggers.

Fortunately, John Harris and the Millenium organizers introduced a new service at this year's conference, a free shuttle bus service which would make regular laps around downtown Harrisburg to the various downtown showcase venues, including the Midtown. So I caught the shuttle bus, which took me right to the Midtown Tavern doorstep – excellent! (And once there, I observed how poorly lit this part of town was compared to the Hilton just a few blocks away, and was thankful the shuttle service was available this year.)

I arrived at the Midtown during the intermission before RU21's set. A lot of folks were there initially, but as the hour was getting late, a stream of folks began trickling out of the establishment before RU21 took the stage. Looking at the relatively small size of the Midtown, I wondered just where bands would perform in this room – I would soon find out.

Soon, from my table across the room, I heard the band start to play, but couldn't see exactly where they were performing from. So I got up and moved closer, to find RU21 (and apparently every other showcasing band at this venue) were playing in a corner of the room between the bar and the wall. (For an Altoona frame of reference, their playing space was slightly smaller than the Monkey Wharf/old Sebastiano's hotel stage.) Fans could observe RU21 either from over a wooden banister separating the stage from the main bar, or from the narrow entrance to the "stage" area, back by the sound board. It was an awkward setting, but RU21 made the most of it.

RU21's base sound is hook-oriented punk-infused modern rock reminiscent of Elvis Costello or Matthew Sweet. This group showed an ability to craft catchy melodies, evidenced by strong tunes such as "Yesterday's Gone," "All We've Got Is Now," "Without You," the title track from their CD Playing with My Mind, the closer "Standing" and more. Besides their strong original tunes, the other big highlight of RU21's set was a rocked-up version of Roger Miller's chestnut "King of the Road," which Geoff Hamer and co. escalated into a rowdy crowd sing-along. RU21 was tuneful, energetic and enthusiastic, and kept their set tight-paced and action-packed.

The setting was cramped; and as the night wound down, tired Millenium audience members steadily filtered out the door, only leaving the trooper bar patrons to cheer RU21 on by set's end. But I was glad I accepted the invitation to catch RU21's set at the Midtown. These guys rock!



**RU21.**



**Geoff Hamer of RU21.**

Now very late in the night, I awaited the shuttle bus to pick me up and return me to the Hilton. The bus did show up a few minutes later, and I was en route back – thinking it was the end of the evening's showcases.

But upon arriving back at the Hilton, I discovered that the showcase party there was still going on...Dead 50's were in the final stages of their showcase set and were tearing the roof off the Hilton as I arrived. As they did during their showcase there last year, Dead 50's unleashed balloons upon the dancefloor crowd, and were jubilantly pounding out power punk/pop originals. A friendly moshpit was churning at stagefront; but a small skirmish between two over-excited fans hastened the end of the set and night for Dead 50's.



**(LEFT) Dead 50's. (RIGHT) Keynote speaker Tom Makoul.**

### DAY THREE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Throughout the weeks preceding Millenium and throughout Millenium weekend, the keynote speaker for this year's Conference was a mystery. Rumor had it that several names had been approached about keynoting the event, but each had to decline the offer because of other engagements. As a number of people congregated in the Hilton's main ballroom, the identity of this year's keynote speaker was still shrouded in mystery.

Soon, Millenium host John Harris took the podium, and quickly introduced the mystery keynote speaker...concert promoter Tom Makoul. In the past three decades, Tom Makoul has been to the eastern PA concert scene what DiCesare-Engler has been to the western PA scene; he has brought major names to stages in Harrisburg, Allentown and other areas over the years. But as he was about to explain, the major concert business has become difficult in the present day.

Tom explained that he is a survivor in the concert business, and has seen more than his fair share of bands and artists over the years.

He began to address the musicians in the audience by explaining that bands and artists spend more time offstage than they do onstage in the music business, and that more time is spent in the preparation and business stage of the music business than in the actual onstage performance itself. Tom said that because of the time invested in the non-musical aspects of the music business, artists need to learn the rules of the music business game. Tom's first piece of advice was to hire a reputable manager,

because many talent brokers won't deal with talent direct. Tom also added that the music business is still a people business, and that a reputable manager might be able to open doors for musicians that otherwise might not be open.

Tom then started to discuss the concert business itself, and how staging major concerts has become more difficult in recent years. Tom surveyed the audience about what they felt hurt the concert business the most in recent years, before offering his own 3-letter answer to the same question. MTV. Tom explained that he felt that MTV harmed the concert business overall, by removing the visual mystique from music that prompted fans to attend concerts to begin with. As Tom explained, after MTV's inception, why would a fan shell out cash to see an artist in concert when he/she could watch the artist on MTV for free? And beyond that, for the artist who wasn't photogenic, an appearance on MTV could turn people off from paying money to see that performer live.

Tom cited other factors that have hurt the concert business in recent years, such as the price tag of doing concerts. Tom explained that the costs of talent, venues and advertising concerts have all risen, resulting in less concerts because of the increased risk of a show losing money.

And Tom cited yet another factor that has made the concert business difficult – the corporate merger of major talent brokers under one corporate banner – SFX Entertainment, now owned by Clearchannel Communications. With Clearchannel/SFX buying out many regional promotions, talent agents have less buyers to shop their artists to, and are at the mercy of SFX. Like radio and the recording industry, big business has taken over the bulk of the concert industry. And for the independent concert promoter, the opportunities for making money in the concert business are far less now than they were a few years ago.

In closing, Tom offered hope to the musicians present, saying that regardless the changes in the industry in recent years, everybody is still looking for that next potential superstar band or artist, and the doors are still open for somebody to make

it. Tom closed by again recommending that bands find professional management who can maneuver through the open doors of the music business.

After the keynote address, it was soon time for more seminars and panel discussions. The first one I checked out was "How Can Radio Help Besides Airplay?," looking at the ways radio stations can help a band's career without actually playing their music on air. Panelists included 105.7 "The X" program director Claudine DeLorenzo, who moderated the panel; also Lenny Diana of The X in Pittsburgh; John Nardachone of Atlantic Records, Michelle Linver of Reprise Records, Al Tavara of Elektra Records, and Ricky Leigh Mensch of music trade publication Hits Magazine.

In giving an overview of the seminar, Claudine explained that besides the obvious benefit of possible airplay, radio stations can do a lot off the air to help local bands advance their careers. One of the first things she mentioned was weekly communications between herself and record label representatives shopping their artists. Record label reps are constantly keeping their ears open for unsigned acts creating a "buzz" on a given area's music scene, and Claudine explained that local "buzz" acts can and do come up in her conversations with record reps.

On the same topic of radio networking with labels and other stations, Al Tavara added that the main reason the band Saliva was breaking out nationally was radio networking – stations spreading the word to other stations about Saliva and the response the group was getting on the request lines, etc.

Claudine also offered suggestions to local bands about how to better utilize radio to help their careers. She suggested bands add radio stations to their regular e-mail/ mailing lists, and update the station on band happenings, upcoming shows, etc. She recommended e-mail over phone calls, saying e-mails were less intrusive and interruptive. Claudine also advised bands to promote themselves at station-sponsored concerts and promotions, which can provide excellent opportunities to reach a lot of potential fans in a short amount of time via handing out schedules, flyers, bumper stickers, etc. Station-sponsored events provide an excellent opportunity for bands to market themselves.

Michelle elaborated on the marketing suggestion, saying that bands and artists need to build awareness about themselves and their music; and that any marketing tools – T-shirts, bumper stickers, taking CD's to CD and skate shops, bars, posting on local music Internet outlets, etc. – gets the word out there.

Claudine also recommended that bands and artists who work with the station on promotional concerts and events stand to benefit a lot more than those who don't. She then recalled the instance of a recent "X" concert event, "Day In The Park," where a local band contacted to perform at the event tried to charge the station \$2,500 to play the show! Claudine mentioned that Kid Rock, breaking out nationally at the time, was coming in and doing the concert for FREE. She made the offer to the local band once again and explained that this was a major promotional opportunity for them, but the band steadfastly stuck with the \$2,500 price tag. End result – that band didn't play at "Day In The Park," and have/will not be contacted about performing at future "X"-sponsored events.

It was also explained that radio is a ratings game, and that it is increasingly difficult for radio stations to take risks on local artists and possibly jeopardize their ratings. While it is possible for a station to take a chance on playing a local artist, radio is big business, especially in major markets, and it is increasingly more difficult for a station to take a risk on playing an unknown or unfamiliar artist.

In summarizing the panel discussion, musicians were told to keep working hard at promoting themselves and their music, continue to develop their marketing skills, and to be patient. And bands and artists who are patient and work with radio are likely to be ahead in the game than those who are not.



Following this panel, I took a stroll back to the "X" sound stage to see what was up. I arrived as the band Cara's Mosaic was finishing their last song. I didn't get to see a whole lot of this band, but what I did see sounded good, in a bluesy vein.

From there, I was off to another panel discussion, "The Future of Music in the Digital Age." For me, this was one of the more anticipated seminars I wanted to check out this year – especially given the court ruling against Napster came down earlier in the week. I went into this seminar expecting all sorts of fireworks and debate over Napster.

It didn't happen.

Napster was touched on at the beginning of the discussion. Moderator Noel Ramos of InterMIXX, music law attorney Bernie Resnick, Dick Gabriel of the American Federation of Musicians and Sam Kimball of Clearchannel Communications discussed the Napster decision briefly, and all were in favor of it, saying that Napster and free exchange of copyrighted music put artists at risk.

From there, though, the discussion shifted from Napster to the overall bigger picture – protection of musical creations on the Internet. Sam brought up the concept of DRM – Digital Rights Management, and it was established that artists needed to become educated about protecting their music in this new forum.

Noel told the small audience that artists are losing money to the major recording industry. Record companies get most of the money earned by their artists' creations, and the average artist receives a 10%-12% royalty rate from the labels for their music. It was mentioned that Janet Jackson receives the largest royalty rate for an artist on major label – 20%!

On the other hand, singer Ani DiFranco has built a successful career largely on her own, selling and controlling her own music and CD's, and the return rate on royalties is much larger for her than most major label artists. The point being – it is not impossible for an artist to be successful independent of the major recording industry, if that artist does his/her homework, learns the workings of the music business and becomes self-sufficient.

In dealing with record labels, major or independent, several recommendations were made. First, make sure the label puts their promotional machinery behind you, and that you are not buried behind some other artist who gets all the priority (a commonplace occurrence with major labels). Never sign a recording contract blindly – go over it with qualified legal counsel, and know what you are signing before you sign it!

Noel plugged his own InterMIXX ([www.intermixx.com](http://www.intermixx.com)) website as a resource to help independent artists learn and maneuver their way through the music business and the Internet.

The discussion wrapped up with mentions of several items to help musicians protect their music on the Internet, including "musical DNA" encoding, mediatags and other protective mechanisms.

After this panel, back to the "X" sound stage, where Harrisburg funk/groove-rockers O.J. Clinton were performing. This band was very together, and I liked their hard-yet-funky groove. Again, I didn't get to see a whole lot of this band, but what I did see I liked.

Next up was Halestorm. After a few minutes to get Liz' keyboard set up, Halestorm would not only get to play a song on the "X" stage, but also perform it LIVE ON THE AIR! The "X"'s Jen Shade interviewed Liz Hale for a few moments, before Liz and Halestorm launched into a near-flawless rendition of their song "Shadows of My Heart." You could feel the energy in the room as Liz, Arejay and Roger Hale put heart and soul into the performance, and received a rousing round of applause afterwards.



**Halestorm knocks 'em dead on the 'X' stage.**

Back to seminar...I walked in late to one of the most crowded seminars at this year's Millenium, "A & R." A panel of record company representatives shared thoughts on what they look for in prospective bands to sign, and other aspects of the major recording business. As I did arrive late and had to stand at the rear of the room, I wasn't able to catch names of the panelists here, and only got to hear a few key points of the discussion. Each panelist used different criteria in determining what the record label was interested in and what it was looking to promote or push at a given moment. Generally, one strong song recorded well likely received more attention than an entire album of songs recorded so-so. And within the ranks of a record label, the acts that cost more to market received the most attention from the label; i.e. the acts the label invested the most money into are the ones that receive top priority attention, so the label could see a return on their investment.

Following this seminar, the business portion of Millenium was winding down. There was still activity back at the "X" sound stage, and I ventured back one more time to catch two more acts; Baltimore-based Downpour, who demonstrated a powerful, heavy-edged modern metal sound, and Harrisburg's Jellybricks, who did a nice job on their unplugged version of "Austin."



**Downpour.**



**The Jellybricks unplugged.**

I returned to the trade show, and as participants and vendors were breaking down their tables, John Harris had donated a complimentary keg of beer on the trade show floor as musicians and music-related folks got some last-minute schmoozing in. I got to meet two members of Baltimore's Hyper Chyld, who I had seen perform two nights before at Shakey's. (That initial contact led to Hyper Chyld's eventual appearance on Q94's "Backyard Rocker" this past May.) I also ran into the members of Julian Fist, who had just completed the mastering of their soon-to-be-released full-length CD, Pushing Audio Platinum. Julian Fist invited me to a rare preview listen to the new album, as it was played through the main Hilton Ballroom's sound system as a soundcheck for that room's showcase gig later that evening! The early prognosis on the new Julian Fist album – kicks ass!

After this point, I retired to my hotel room briefly to relax for a few moments, and rest up for my final showcase of this year's Millenium.



**GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN – Liz Hale of Halestorm and Wendy Dampman of DK Entertainment strike one final pose from the Millennium 2001 Trade Show.**

**PENNSYLVANIA MUSICIAN MAGAZINE SHOWCASE @ GULLIFTY'S UNDERGROUND FEB. 17**

As was the case at last year's Millennium, Pennsylvania Musician Magazine was again sponsoring one of the showcases at this year's Millennium. It was again at Gullifty's Underground. And there was again a free complimentary food buffet including, among other things, pizza and wings. And again...I was there!

Riding with Robin and Whitey Noll (and helping Whitey load equipment in as his special honorary guest roadie), we arrived in plenty of time to enjoy the food buffet before the first band was slated to start. I ate the wings, and gave them my blessing and approval. The pizza, pasta, and other finger foods also received my blessings. The food was complimentary, and it was good. Free food is always good food.

The first band on the Gullifty's stage this night – the Poptart Monkeys. Up first at this showcase because they had another gig 40 miles away later in the evening, Poptart Monkeys showcased many of the new original songs from their recently-released CD *Dancing With My Lunatic*, including the opener "Wrecking Ball," "The Way Home," "La De Da," "Paint My World," "Choke," "Only Human," and of course the single, "Dancefloor Collision." The group also threw in a few remakes, including a very unexpected version of Lita Ford's "Kiss Me Deadly," and the showstopper finale version of Quiet Riot's "Metal Health," with singer Paul Reddon pushing his voice to the absolute limits during the song's homestretch run. The Poptarts delivered their trademark party onstage, complete with subplot hijinx between Paul, bassist James Balogach (sporting new Goldilocks-styled pigtails this night), and guitarists Bill Talanca and Chris Kurtz. This was a good rousing start to the evening's music, and the Poptart Monkeys had Gullifty's shouting hearty approval by the end of their set.



**Poptart Monkeys.**

In an interesting plot twist, the Poptart Monkeys' explosive and boisterous set was followed by the laid-back and decidedly mellow set of Whitey Noll and David Greene. Showcasing in support of his new CD Beneath the Curtains and the Clouds, Whitey – on ukelele and vocals – and David on acoustic guitar, performed songs from the CD such as "Black Coffee," "Help Me," the title track "Curtains and Clouds," "Ukaboom Man," "Questions," "Why A Gemini" and a special love song sent out to Whitey's wife, Robin. The performance was low-key, laid-back and relaxed, with Whitey offering insight on the songs, the recording project, and a touch of humor along the way. Though a total departure from the Poptart Monkeys' opening set, the Gullifty's crowd was appreciative of Whitey and David's efforts.



**Whitey Noll & David Greene.**

Next up – yet another interesting musical plot twist on the night, from the Altoona entry on this night's showcase, Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys. How would

Harrisburg respond to a set of “the blues you can’t refuse?” Once the introduction was made and Eric “Fat Vinny” Kelly growled out his intro to the boisterous blues standard “Boom Boom Boom,” the Wiseguys had this crowd in their pockets, no sweat! The Wiseguys fired through tunes from their full-length debut CD The Blues You Can’t Refuse, including “1:30 Blues,” “The Phone Call,” and “The River” – which gave the Gullifty’s crowd a reason to do something almost rarely seen at shows these days – SLOW DANCE! Pennsylvania Musician first couple Whitey and Robin Noll and numerous other couples packed the dance floor as ‘Fat Vinny’ crooned out the Mark Panek-penned tune. The trio then continued with “You Can’t Refuse The Blues,” “There’s a Lot of Blues Around” and a version of B.B. King’s “The Thrill Is Gone.” The Wiseguys made this set a blues party, with Fat Vinny’s brimstone delivery commanding the attention of the Gullifty’s crowd and never letting up. Highlights were numerous – Fat Vinny’s slide guitarwork, which surfaced frequently; his behind-the-neck and by-the-teeth solos; the group’s proud stage presence and more. Fat Vinny won the Gullifty’s crowd with this set, and represented the ‘Toona well!



**Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys.**

At about this point of the evening, lots was happening. Gullifty’s was near packed as a steady stream of Millenium revelers made their way in; some just arriving to attend this showcase, others barhopping from showcase to showcase around town just to see what bands and partake in what parties they could. I was running into a lot of acquaintances I hadn’t seen since either last Millenium or since the Salvation Army benefit in November. An assortment of band members and musicians, music fans, Pennsylvania Musician readers, and Eagle 92.7 afternoon personality Gina Rockey, celebrating a birthday this night. Gullifty’s was bustling on this last night of Millenium – it was a party!

In the meantime, Halestorm prepared to perform. Could Halestorm deliver the same goods they did earlier in the day when they performed live on “The X” sound stage? Once wedding dress-clad 17-year-old Liz Hale entered the room while crooning the opening verse to Heart’s “Crazy On You,” it was never in doubt – Halestorm still had the magic and then some! The “Halestorm Rock Show” slammed the exclamation point on their set early, and proceeded to keep the Gullifty’s crowd attentive and awestruck as their set progressed. The group decelerated to allow Liz to perform her hit ballad “Rose In December,” before the tempo picked back up for the original “Shout.” Another ballad in “I Forgive You” led to the Halestorm epic

“Shadows of My Heart,” before the group finished their set with “You Can Try,” featuring the rare sighting of band mom Beth Hale contributing backing vocals onstage. Halestorm offered an entertaining set with theatrics, variety, and the awesome talents of Liz and drummer Arejay Hale, two youngsters who seemingly improve with every show. I thought overall the song order might have been more consistent, as the ballads disrupted any momentum the more rocking tracks established. But the tunes and performances were all good, and Halestorm held the crowd’s attention start to finish.



**Liz Hale of Halestorm makes her grand entrance.**



**Roger, Arejay (behind the drum kit) and Liz Hale of Halestorm.**

It had been a while since I had seen Throttle 5 perform – actually, the last time they played in Altoona, back when City Limits was new Sebastiano’s. This Lancaster foursome had gotten haircuts since the last time I saw them (at least frontman Luke Mathias, I didn’t recognize him at first when he came over to speak with me). Anyway, upon moments after commencing their set, it was apparent that (a) this

band had not lost a single joule of energy since the last time I had seen them in the 'Toona, and (b) Throttle 5 had a legion of supporters in the house to root them on! The dance floor became busy almost instantly, and stayed busy as the group fired through their mostly original set. There were a few new original tunes; plus several from the group's debut CD Options, such as "Loudmouth," "Remember," "Wound," "Some People Say" and the title track "Options" which closed the set. Throttle 5 also broke out a feisty rendition of Soft Cell's "Tainted Love;" conspicuous by its absence, though, was Throttle 5's version of Men Without Hats' "Safety Dance," heretofore a staple of their live show (at least the times I had seen them before). Throttle 5 kept the action full-throttle through their whole set, with few interruptions along the way. Their pacing was tight, not giving the dance floor occupants any opportunity to sit down. Essentially an airtight performance, Throttle 5 showed here that they had indeed hit their stride and executed like a well-oiled machine.



**Throttle 5 gets Gullifty's dance floor busy.**

Which brings us to the final band of my Millenium 2001 experience, Spellbound. This group had been writing new songs and readying to record their second CD, so I was interested in hearing how the new material sounded. Opening with "The Best Of Me," the first thing I noticed about Spellbound was more aggression and attack. This band seemed hungrier, charging harder into their instruments and moving about the stage with a greater sense of urgency. Spellbound proceeded to mix old and new originals, such as "Road to Nowhere," "My Imagination," "City of Angels," "When I Was Younger," "Wasting My Time" and – to finish out the night – a few 80's covers, including Dokken's "Alone Again," and the Ozzy/Black Sabbath medley of "Paranoid" into "Bark At The Moon." While more aggressive, Spellbound's sense of melody remained intact – the new tunes – especially "Wasting My Time" – still display a knack for strong hooks and choruses. Execution-wise, Spellbound did a good job; Mark McNelley's voice was clear and concise, and Andy Dulak drilled some stinging guitar leads through the course of the set – a guitarist who still plays leads in this day and age, amazing! New bassist Ray Miller laid down a steady low-end bass line, and drummer Mike Caldwell was feral and furious behind the kit. As the final band of a six-band showcase, Spellbound fell victim to audience fatigue, and the crowd began thinning out as their set progressed. But the hardcore rock fans stuck it out, and at least a few stuck on the dance floor for most of Spellbound's set.





**Andy Dulak of Spellbound.**

And thus, for me, another Millenium went into the books. There was a Sunday jazz brunch the next day, and a final night of showcases Sunday night for those fans and attendees who wanted to stretch it out another day. But I had obligations back on the hometown front (the Millenium recap edition of Q94's "Backyard Rocker"), so Sunday morning – after groggily grubbing and recovering from the night before with Shel and Troy at Friendly's in Camp Hill – I was en route back to the Altoona, pondering the Millenium I had just experienced.

### **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON MILLENIUM 2001**

In the months and weeks prior to this year's Millenium Music Conference, there seemed to be more controversy surrounding the Conference, at least on local music message boards. As the event has become more popular with each successive year, more bands and artists are clamoring for showcase slots, and inevitably – given the finite amount of venues and stages available for this particular weekend – more get turned away. More than a few frustrated bands and musicians voiced their displeasure about Millenium. Some were voicing obvious sour grapes over not being selected to showcase; others cried favoritism and politics; others balked at the number of out-of-state bands showcasing this year; and a few even made a few legitimate arguments regarding genres of music being overlooked (i.e. – metal and blues).

Granted, Millenium isn't perfect, and when you are dealing with the number of performers, venues, industry people and other fine details the conference organizers deal with each year, problems are bound to happen. Some bands and artists are going to fall through the cracks. Not everybody is going to leave Millenium happy, especially if their expectations are unrealistically high.

If you accept the Millenium Music Conference as a microcosm of the music industry itself, you can learn some very valuable lessons from the Conference that can benefit your career if you are chasing the grail of a label deal or superstardom.

First, the selection process...If your band did not get selected, what did you submit? Were the songs good? Was the recording good? Was the packaging good? Did you send a professional-looking promo pack, or did you send your band bio on a pizza-sauce-stained napkin? Were your songs recorded in a studio or through a boom box in somebody's basement? Were they submitted on a CD or decent-quality cassette, or some three-for-a-buck cheap Chinese-made economy cassettes? Did you send an 8 x 10 glossy photo, or just a photocopy of a photograph taken on your sister's point-and-shoot disposable camera? Lesson #1 to learn: If you were rejected in the initial selection process, look at what you submitted, and improve it for next year. Hundreds and hundreds of bands are submitting packages for consideration for next year's Millenium – take your package seriously if you have hopes of it being noticed out of the sea of other packages submitted.

Second, assuming you made the cut in the selection process and get to showcase and attend the Millenium Music Conference – why are you attending? What are your goals and objectives for attending? Are you going to the Conference to learn more about the music industry you are trying to succeed in? Are you attending to network, meet people and build bridges to your future? Or are you attending Millenium with the hopes that you live that magical moment – that during your showcase performance, that record company bigwig just happens to be in the room at the right time, is floored by your set, and wants to ink you to a multi-record deal on the spot? BE REALISTIC with your expectations when you attend Millenium. You probably won't get signed there. But with some planning and focus, you can meet people who can help you with your career – from music industry representatives who can give advice on your music and presentation, to other bands who can help you break into new markets and get in front of new faces. Attend the Millenium Music Conference with the objective of networking with people, attending the seminars and learning as much as you can about the music business, and soaking in as much as you can during your stay there, and you will likely be further ahead at the end of the weekend. You get out of the Millenium Music Conference what you put into it.

Having said the above, there are a few areas where I think the Conference can be improved. First, I agree that more genres of music should be represented besides just the popular flavors of the month. Metal, jazz, blues, country, worldbeat – there are still thriving scenes for all these genres of music and more, and I'd like to see Millenium address the career possibilities for artists in these genres. How does a blues band/performer get their music heard? How do metal bands succeed without radio or MTV airplay? And just what does an amateur country band or artist do to get attention in this age of crossover country/pop music? I'd like to see Millenium benefit a wider range of musicians. And the payback – I think musicians of different genres interacting with each other would broaden perspectives and fuel new musical ideas.

And while the Millenium Music Conference's focus is on the music BUSINESS, I'd like to see at least some attention given to developing musical skills – perhaps by booking name guitarists, drummers, or other instrumentalists to do clinics during Millenium weekend. Or devote one showcase gig to musical “mentoring” – giving young and aspiring players a chance to mix it up onstage alongside seasoned pros to improve their chops. It is the music business, true, but let's take steps to help musicians in their creation of music so there will continue to be a music business!

In all, though, I thought this year's Millenium Music Conference again lived up to its expectations, and I came away with more knowledge and understanding of the present state of the music business, and what performers need to do to succeed in it.

# **THE FINAL ENCORE**

## ***Concert Reviews with D'Scribe***

**D'SCRIBE'S NOTE:** Part of the delay in getting this issue of the Cut out was my resolve to try to finish writing concert reviews going back to last summer's shows. As time progressed, though, and the fine details of these shows started fading further and further from my memory, I decided to abandon most of the reviews (or at least delay including them until my recollection of each is complete), and concentrate on more recent shows that are fresher in my memory banks. But I do start with one leftover from last year...

### **IRON MAIDEN/QUEENSRYCHE/HALFORD @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN 8/11/00**

One of the first and best concerts I ever saw happened in 1981 at the Cambria County War Memorial Arena in Johnstown, as Judas Priest, Whitesnake and Iron Maiden delivered a concert that would help rivet me to live music forever. Priest, with Rob Halford, was touring their Point of Entry album, and simply delivered one of the most electric sets I have ever witnessed! Whitesnake was a relative unknown act in 1981, some 5 years away from their future fame and fortune. And the Paul DiAnno-fronted Iron Maiden, supporting their second album Killers, won over the Johnstown metalheads enough this night that they got to do an encore – one of the very few times I have ever seen an opening band encore!

Some 19 years later, I would travel to Post Gazette Pavilion at Star Lake to see almost the reverse scenario – Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford's self-titled new band, Halford, opening for Iron Maiden, with contemporaries Queensryche bridging the two.

I won't go into the sordid details about the circumstances leading up to the concert, except that after several mishaps regarding purchasing tickets that weren't needed and people backing out from attending the concert, I found myself with the task of trying to find somebody to purchase two extra pavilion tickets on the day of the show, lest the person who purchased them (not me) would wind up \$60 in the hole for the concert and unable to go. I tried several avenues but came up empty – but heard through the grapevine that Bellwood rock and roll wildman Frank Dixon might be interested in attending the show. Not having Frank's phone number, I determined that a visit to his house was in order to see if he wanted to attend this show. Fortunately he was in, and yes, he wanted to attend. So after Frank made several phone calls and assembled a travel entourage to make the journey, we were on our way.

Frank the wheelman...WHAT A WILDMAN! The trip to Star Lake was a memorable one, as we learned that Frank had unique and effective ways to deal with gridlock, rush hour traffic and backed up highways. And once the entertaining trip culminated at Star Lake, Frank also had interesting ways of wheeling and dealing for a prime parking spot – what an entertaining journey!

Soon after arriving, we were inside the Star Lake, and partaking in the rocking festivities onstage. Halford was already underway as I made my way to my seat towards the rear of the Star Lake pavilion area, just a few seats away from my Q94 co-worker, "The Big Man" Dave Rainey (an avid Maiden fan). I had heard several accounts that Rob Halford's self-named project had returned the former Judas Priest frontman to the harder side of the rock spectrum, after his lukewarm techno experiments in the short-lived Two. In convincing fashion, Rob Halford's new project proved that Rob was back to doing metal, as the group did several crunching original songs from their debut CD Resurrection, before digging into the Judas Priest archives

for "Hellion/Electric Eye," "Freewheel Burning," "Breaking The Law" and "Tyrant." Clearly the Star Lake crowd – relatively small at this point of the evening – approved of Halford's return to metallic form, as they cheered the group, especially during the Priest numbers.

More folks filtered in during the intermission, and soon it was time for Queensryche's set. I had seen Queensryche back in April at an overcrowded Metropol in Pittsburgh's Strip District...On one hand, I was glad to see Queensryche back at Star Lake, because Metropol was obviously too small a venue for Queensryche to perform. But on the other hand, as this was Iron Maiden's concert and Queensryche were guests, the group was unable to greet their fan club members backstage in the usual "Meet & Greet" afforded to Queensryche fan club members. It was Maiden's show, and the Maiden people said no meet-and-greets backstage. Oh well...

Queensryche performed a 45-minute set featuring most of their best-known tunes. They opened with "Revolution Calling," also did "Speak" and closed with "Eyes of a Stranger" from Operation: Mindcrime. The 'Ryche, with new guitarist Kelly Gray onstage, also did "Empire," "Walk In The Shadows," "Queen of the Reich," "Take Hold of the Flame," plus a song or two from their latest CD, Q2K. Geoff Tate's voice, like Rob Halford's before him, was in fine form, and he too was reaching for and achieving the heavens with his vocal acrobatics. As he had at the Metropol show, Kelly Gray seemed to fit in pretty well with his new band, and did an admirable job on the established Queensryche classics. Accustomed to their lengthier and deeper sets as headliners, I still thought this was a good, solid set from Queensryche, if a little incomplete.

The Star Lake grounds seemed to fill up faster during the intermission preceding Iron Maiden. Obviously Iron Maiden's legions of fans were glad to see the band reunited with Bruce Dickinson and back in action. The advance word was that Maiden's stage show was going to be massive – probably an added factor in the growing crowd at this point of the evening.

It wasn't too long of a wait before the house lights darkened, and the stage lights came on to unveil a castle-like stage set-up. The headliners, Iron Maiden, opened with their radio single from Brave New World, "Wicker Man," and Star Lake went wild! Bruce Dickinson's voice was in fine form, and he and Maiden seemed to be recharged and reinvigorated! The group immediately went into another track from the new CD, "Ghost of the Navigator." Bruce then angrily reamed out some stagefront nimrod who was throwing stuff up on stage (what possesses a\*\*holes to do this crap?), and upon completing the scolding, launched into the title track of the new album, "Brave New World." The group then dug back to the Paul DiAnno years for "Wrathchild," and action picked up in my neck of the woods.

Absorbed with the action onstage, I didn't notice anything else happening at first, until "The Big Man," Dave Rainey, and I were both splashed by flying beer. Then we noticed the cause, about 5 or 6 rows in front of us – a fight! It was a pretty good little donnybrook between two fans, but Star Lake yellow-shirt security quickly discovered the problem and moved in to resolve it.

Iron Maiden continued with one of their classics, "Two Minutes to Midnight," after which Bruce Dickinson launched into a colorful tirade against music trendiness and the labeling of Iron Maiden under the heading "80's hair band." Bruce voiced some choice words (many of them the four-letter variety) against the music industry, record labels, and those who declared that metal was yesterday's news. It was an entertaining sermon, and the Star Lake crowd rallied behind Bruce as his rhetoric heated up.

Iron Maiden then proceeded with another one from the new album, "Blood Brothers," before surprisingly dipping back into the Blayze Bayley archives for "Sign

of the Cross" off The X Factor. I'm happy to report that Bruce Dickinson's voice did this song much better justice in the live setting than Blaze Bayley's did in the studio setting. This was followed by "The Mercenary" and "Dream of Mirrors" off Brave New World, and yet another Blaze Bayley-era track, "The Clansman" off the Virtual XI disc. Iron Maiden then tapped the Seventh Son of a Seventh Son album for "The Evil That Men Do," performed the title track from Fear of the Dark, and ended their main set with their showstopper title song "Iron Maiden," which triggered a loud and raucous eruption from the Star Lake crowd.

Maiden was obviously back with a vengeance. Bruce Dickinson was in rare form, both singing his words and venting his rancor with passion and acid. Steve Harris' trademark detailed bass rudiments were prominent throughout the entire set, and Nicko McBrain's drumwork was fast and delivered with a sense of urgency. And all three guitarists – the returning Adrian Smith and incumbent axes Dave Murray and Jannick Gers – each carried their share of the load with explosive solos, harmonizing dual leads, playing nip-and-tuck with each other and more. This was indeed an reinvigorated Iron Maiden, playing for keeps once again.

The initial game plan was for our entourage to rendezvous at the Dixon car during the encore, so we could make a quick exit of the Star Lake environs before the rest of the crowd. So as the unmistakable ominous voice lead-in to "Number of the Beast" triggered the encore, I found myself virtually backpedaling through and out the gates of the Star Lake, watching the onstage action as I moved towards the entrance. I was in the parking lot and back at the car as Maiden performed the last two songs of the encore, "Hallowed Be Thy Name" and "Sanctuary." And thanks to the lively wheelman skills of Frank Dixon, we were one of the first vehicles out of the Star Lake parking lot and 'Toona-bound as "Sanctuary" was wrapping up.

In the end, this was an all-around, satisfying concert. Iron Maiden was back with a vengeance. Queensryche put on a good set, and Rob Halford went back to his metal roots. At least this night, all was well and back to normal in the world of heavy metal.

### **3 DOORS DOWN/SHADES APART/ECONOLINE CRUSH @ CAMBRIA COUNTY WAR MEMORIAL ARENA, JOHNSTOWN, PA 5/3/01**

There's a fine line between success and failure in the music business. Between superstardom and obscurity. Between "making it" and getting dumped by a record label. Between radio "hit" and "stiff."

So many variables can differentiate success of failure...the right song at the right moment, the mood of the music-buying public, being on the edge of the music industry's next big trend...

Last year, "Kryptonite" by 3 Doors Down was the right song at the right time, and it propelled this Mississippi fivesome to instant stardom. The follow-up singles, "Loser" and the current single "Duck and Run," reinforced that stardom, and soon 3 Doors Down had their own concert tour. This night, the tour would swing through Johnstown's Cambria County War Memorial.

Cohort/wheelman Big Jim and I arrived at the War Memorial, ignored the religious fanatics handing out literature outside the doors, and entered the arena shortly into openers Econoline Crush's set. I saw Econoline Crush once before when they opened for KISS at Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center, and remembered them not sounding bad at all on their brand of melodic modern rock. They did a decent job this night as well. Singer Trevor Hurst addressed the Johnstown fans throughout the set, leading them in cheers and doing his best to fire them up for the rest of the show. The group did more of the melodic hard-edged modern pop I witnessed from them earlier, including songs from their new CD, Brand New History. Being largely unfamiliar with the group's songs, I picked out only one title, "What It's Like" from

the new album. But the band has some decent song hooks, and I wouldn't be surprised to hear more Econoline Crush on the airwaves in the near future.

Intermission allowed us to study the crowd, and the War Memorial wasn't packed by any means – only about 2,000 fans if that. (By comparison, Matchbox 20 two years ago packed the place with over 6,000 fans). It was largely a younger crowd, with a lot of teenagers and kids present – not to mention quite a few parents.

And with the War Memorial selling beer in the lobby to over-21 fans, we also observed the War Memorial's "undercover" beer security, scoping the arena floor area in search of people drinking beer without the necessary wristband. We saw quite a few folks get busted for drinking without the wristband. Some were able to return, but a few didn't.

Eventually, the second band of the evening, Shades Apart, took the stage. I did not recognize the name Shades Apart, but by their set's end I was convincingly won over by their performance. A power trio, singer/guitarist Mark V., bassist Kevin Lynch and drummer Ed Brown fired off energized melodic punkish rock, including their recent radio single "Valentine" (which I recognized once I heard it), tracks from their new CD Sonic Boom, and songs from their previous discography, such as "100 Days," "Sputnik (Watching Over You)" and their double-time rocking version of Soft Cell's "Tainted Love." Shades Apart had great song hooks and melodies, and singer Mark had a commanding, powerful voice. And this band was playing for keeps; they broke a serious sweat onstage, with constant movement and energy. Shades Apart took the ball handed them by Econoline Crush and ran with it; further firing up the excited War Memorial crowd. Very impressive set.

What ultimately won me over about Shades Apart – besides their excellent set this night – was what they did after their set. The three band members made their way to the main souvenir stand in the War Memorial lobby, and spent the rest of the night – during and after 3 Doors Down's set – greeting fans and autographing stickers. Obviously for Shades Apart, the fans matter. And for a band trying to maintain their 'buzz' after "Valentine's" brief success at radio, pressing the flesh with their new Johnstown fan base this night was an important way to help insure that people remembered this band after the night was over.

We spent the intermission after Shades Apart's set again observing the Cambria County War Memorial LCB busting anybody consuming alcohol without a wristband. These guys were smooth, wandering incognito into the crowd, cornering unsuspecting violators and escorting them from the main floor.

After about a 20-minute wait, it was time for the main event. The arena lights dimmed, and the massive stage lights started glowing blue as they slowly descended towards the stage. The din from the War Memorial audience quickly grew louder, and exploded as headliners 3 Doors Down took the stage and launched into their set.

As their first song got underway, one young lady several people away from us climbed aboard her boyfriend's shoulders, and almost immediately lifted her top to display her wares to the band and the crowd. She would do this several times during 3 Doors Down's set. Meanwhile, about ten feet behind this couple, another guy was lifting his gradeschool-age son up on his shoulders. Needless to say, this kid was getting a show this night!

3 Doors Down proceeded through their set, performing songs from their breakthrough album The Better Life and a number of new songs. Big Jim and I were largely unimpressed. To be fair, 3 Doors Down could play their instruments well, and singer Brad Arnold did a capable job on the vocal end. But visually this band was very unexciting. Frontman Brad was the only band member moving around on stage, the rest of the group was almost stoic in their presentation. They looked tired. Besides playing their song selection, 3 Doors Down offered no real show in

their performance, and lacked the onstage energy and excitement of the two bands that preceded them this night.

But they did the hits, and the Cambria County War Memorial audience remained largely ecstatic through the entirety of 3 Doors Down's set. At one point, the group strapped on acoustics and sat down to perform "Be Like That" (showing only slightly less excitement than when they were standing up). And of course, the War Memorial went nuts when the group launched into the opening bars of the hit "Kryptonite" towards the end of their set. Three songs later, 3 Doors Down again brought the crowd excitement level to another crescendo with their current radio hit "Duck and Run" to close their set.

By this point, Big Jim and I had already decided that we wouldn't be missing a whole lot if we retreated towards the back of the arena from the main crowd swell up front. Up until this point, we hadn't recognized any other Altoona fans in the War Memorial this night...But back by the sound board, we discovered "Uncle Bud" was in the house, grooving and having a jolly time.

As expected given the enthusiastic crowd response, 3 Doors Down returned to perform an encore, starting with a faster-paced song before singer Brad's solo vocal intro into the hit "Loser," which sent the War Memorial audience into one final surge of enthusiastic cheers.

As we exited the arena, we discovered Shades Apart at the souvenir stand and met the band; Big Jim even helped them hand out stickers to several adoring younger fans for a few moments. We then left the War Memorial complex, and witnessed additional entertainment outside – as fans were leaving the War Memorial, the religious fanatics were diligently trying to save souls, attempting to pass out their literature while their ringleaders stood atop pulpits and lectured the masses on their impending road to Hell. As Big Jim and I hastily maneuvered our way past this entourage, we were briefly entertained by a heated verbal confrontation between one of the fanatics and a boisterous, possibly liquored-up fan. The fan shouted several obscenities at the fanatic, who responded by informing the fan he had a "potty mouth." Cheap thrills at the War Memorial!

Afterwards, this concert made me think again about the fine line between success and failure in the music business. 3 Doors Down was the hot band at the moment with their hit single success, and had risen to concert headliner status over Shades Apart and Econoline Crush. As live performances go, 3 Doors Down should have been opening for these other two bands instead of vice-versa. But 3 Doors Down had the right song at the right time, the other two bands did not (at least as of yet, both have just released new albums). Their radio success and album sales – not their live show – guarantees that 3 Doors Down will survive to put out at least one and possibly more albums with their record label, Republic/Universal. Only time and the changing musical climate will determine whether 3 Doors Down can continue to be concert headliners destined for rock immortality, or go into the rock history books as flash-in-the-pans enjoying 15 minutes and three songs' worth of fame or fortune.

#### **ERIC CLAPTON/DOYLE BRAMHALL II & SMOKESTACK @ BRYCE JORDAN CENTER, UNIVERSITY PARK, PA 5/30/01**

Chock up another one for Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center...The Bryce has become an esteemed concert venue for some of the top names in music, and it seems with each passing month that yet another legendary name or prestigious concert tour is announcing a show at this venue. Some names, such as Bruce Springsteen last year and Styx this year, even kicked off their tours here.

On this night, it was the legendary Eric Clapton. Slowhand. To some folks in the late 60's, God. I've liked a lot of Clapton's music over the years, particularly his 70's output. I haven't followed him much in recent years as his music has taken a more

mellow and mainstream approach, but I liked the sound of "Superman Inside," the first single from his new Reptile album. Big Jim came up with the free ticket (thanks much!), so we were here to witness this legend in action this night.

We arrived just as the opening act, Doyle Bramhall II & Smokestack, were getting started. For those unfamiliar with the name, Doyle's father drummed for blues legend Lightnin' Hopkins and was a collaborator with Stevie Ray and Jimmy Vaughan. Doyle II eventually played guitar for Jimmy Vaughan's Fabulous Thunderbirds, and he and Charlie Sexton co-founded the 90's band the Arc Angels. Doyle became friends with Eric Clapton and B.B. King, and contributed two songs to Clapton & King's Riding with the King album. Smokestack is his new band, and they did a good job during their thirty-minute opening set. The base sound suggested a cross of Stevie Ray Vaughan Texas blues with Robin Trower distortion. Smokestack played tunes from their debut CD, Welcome; I wasn't familiar with any of the song titles, but did remember the songs "Green Light Girl" and the title track "Smokestack," which included some hot distortion pedal effects. The melodies were strong, and the playing was good. The sound quality wasn't the cleanest, but from the second level rear of the arena where we were sitting, it wasn't bad. Smokestack's half-hour left a good enough impression with me that I might have to investigate the Welcome CD a bit further.

During the intermission, we noticed a healthy crowd populating the Bryce Jordan Center...a welcome sight, considering that prior word was that ticket sales for this show had been slow. Perhaps reports of Clapton announcing this as his last concert tour prompted many fans to make the late decision to attend, and see this legend while they had one last chance.

After about a 20-minute intermission, the arena lights dimmed, and a lone Clapton stepping out onto the stage brought a loud roar of cheers and applause. Eric sat on a stool and started strumming "Key to the Highway" on one of his acoustic guitars, a low-key kickoff to his nearly two-hour set. He then switched guitars, and he and his backing band slowly commenced the samba-sounding instrumental title track to his latest album Reptile, an indication that Clapton has embraced a touch of jazz in his repertoire. This also enabled the audience their first look at keyboard man David Sancious, one of the night's MVP's. The man was a wizard on the keys, and he had an interesting blow tube hooked into his keys that brought an interesting and captivating sound. I had never seen or heard this before, but in the days after this show I heard several folks in attendance buzzing about Sancious' contributions onstage.

After these first two songs, Clapton greeted the crowd, thanking them for coming to see him and his band perform a collection of the old and new. He then did the first hit of the night, "Tears In Heaven," before he and band followed with a Derek & the Dominos number, "Bell Bottom Blues," and a more recent hit from his 1999 Best Of set, "Change The World." Clapton and his band then proceeded to explore the Pilgrim album over the next four songs, performing "My Father's Eyes," the ballad "River of Tears," the soulful "Goin' Down Slow," and after a short guitar solo intro, "She's Gone." From his new Reptile album, Eric then performed his remake of James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" and the uptempo "Travelin' Light;" before shifting into blues gear for "Hootchie Kootchie Man" and "Have You Ever Loved A Woman."

Up until at least "Hootchie Kootchie Man," the Bryce crowd was politely receptive and cheered Clapton on each song, but the applause wasn't euphoric or fanatical (with the exception of a few rowdy student-type fans seated behind us, who erupted with shouts of "SLOWHAND!! YEAHHHH!!!" from time to time). But when Clapton and co. next launched into "Cocaine," the Jordan Center crowd seemed to come to life quickly. I noticed a few people standing in their seats and grooving, and the



Jordan Center Gestapo converging in on the brave few who tried to dance in the aisles. (Memo to Bryce Jordan Center Gestapo – LIGHTEN UP!) Next was another Clapton favorite, “Wonderful Tonight,” during which a sprinkling of cigarette lighters came on throughout the Jordan complex. And then the set’s finale – and for me, the show’s biggest highlight – “Layla.” This version was a little more stoic and reserved than the original Derek & the Dominos version, but it was still skillfully performed, with Clapton executing clean and fluid guitarwork, and David Sancious offering tasty keyboard work during the song’s homestretch run.

The Jordan Center came alive as Clapton and his band departed the stage, and you knew the encore was imminent. Several moments later, Eric Clapton and band re-emerged, donned instruments and launched into “Sunshine Of Your Love,” which turned into a Jordan Center singalong. Eric and his band then slowed things down to finish the night, with a tastefully-done version of “Somewhere Over The Rainbow.” During a toned-down moment in this song, Eric Clapton introduced the other members of the band – keyboard man David Sancious, guitarist Andy Fairweather-Low, bassist Nathan East, and drummer Steve Gadd. An additional member of Clapton’s touring band, Billy Preston, wasn’t present this night.

My impressions of this show – mostly good. While it would be easy for me to complain that Eric Clapton didn’t do enough of his legendary 60’s/70’s/80’s output, I realize that Clapton has put out enough music over the years that he has tons of material to choose from, and he would probably never be able to do all of his legendary stuff in a given night. And I also accept that Clapton, having achieved the international superstardom and legend that he has, has earned the right to take us on the musical journey HE wants to take us on in a given night. If this is indeed his final concert tour, than perhaps it is appropriate to let him control the journey and indulge his musical mood during this given night. Sure, I would have liked to have heard classics like “Let It Rain,” “I Shot The Sheriff,” “The Core,” “Motherless Children,” “Lay Down Sally,” “Tulsa Time,” “Willie and the Hand Jive,” “White Room” and others. But I can’t say I’m disappointed in what he did perform this night; if anything, I was intrigued by the wide variety of musical directions Eric Clapton indulged during this show, from blues to jazz to pop to standards. And he is the legend, he earned the right to control the direction of his musical journey onstage this night.

And then there was the performance side of the show. Eric Clapton, now 56, still is a masterful guitarist, and played his instruments with skill and proficiency. And beyond that, the man’s voice was in good form this night, especially proven when he hit the high notes on several of the ballads. His support cast was top notch, showcasing their own individual talents within the framework of the song material offered. And at least from where we were sitting – in the back of the arena – this was one of the better concerts sound-wise I have witnessed at the Bryce Jordan Center. Whoever was running sound this night knew what they were doing; I could hear everything clearly.

What we saw this night was Eric Clapton the seasoned veteran performer, showing us his present-day musical world. While he still loves the blues, he seems to be embracing jazz a bit more, and still appears content to be the pop icon as well. Overall I was pleased with this night, and thought this was an entertaining – and interesting – concert.

### **OZZFEST 2001 @ POST GAZETTE PAVILION AT STAR LAKE, BURGETTSTOWN 7/28/01**

It was time once again for that celebration of all things Ozzy and metal, Ozzfest. What was His Ozzness up to this year? What new band discoveries awaited us onstage this year? What unknown name on this year’s Ozzfest bill would be

tomorrow's headlining superstar? What the hell was Crazy Town doing on this year's bill? And what would be the Ozzfest audience's projectile of choice this year? All these pressing questions waited to be answered as this year's Ozzfest event unfolded.

This year, I didn't just travel with Schtiv D'Ump and an Ozzfest entourage...as we assembled in Pellegrine's parking lot to embark on this year's Ozzfest journey, I learned we were traveling with an entire Altoona area Ozzfest motorcade, featuring a contingent from The Grimm, "Jerry's Kids," a contingent from New Pig Corporation and more! A ragtag fleet of some 6 or 7 vehicles – led by Schtiv D'Ump's Jetta – hit the road at 8:30 AM to undertake the journey to the Land Of Ozz(fest).

Knowing that there was road construction work being done on Route 22 just west of the I-279 Exit outside Pittsburgh, our motorcade instead opted to bypass Pittsburgh altogether, and instead followed Route 22 to Delmont, took Route 66 south to Interstate 70, took 70 west to Washington, and then followed Route 18 north to Burgettstown and Star Lake. Schtiv and I missed a turn near Burgettstown and went some 8 miles out of our way, but backtracked our steps, found Route 18 again and still got to Star Lake by around 12 noon.

Experience has taught me that Ozzfest isn't just about a concert...it is a whole social experience, and there is just as much happening in the parking lots before and after Ozzfest as there is within the Star Lake gates. So upon our arrival at the upper Star Lake parking lot, seemingly five miles from the venue, our motorcade convened the pre-Ozzfest tailgate party. We consumed mass quantities of beer and edibles (hot dogs, hamburgers and chips were the nourishment of choice this day), discussed the issues of the day, and observed the Gestapo tactics of both Star Lake security and the local police authorities. The Star Lake yellow-shirt security seemed mainly concerned with nabbing counterfeit concert T-shirt vendors and ticket scalpers, and were in hot pursuit of several of the shirt vendors – vigorously following them around the Star Lake parking area, ready to nab them if they made a sale. The cops, on the other hand, were out in full force to bust underage drinkers, and they were not being gentle about it. One member of our motorcade who didn't bring an ID with him had four 30-packs of brew confiscated by the cops (even though the guy was 22 years old). Here's hoping the police enjoyed their free beer party, courtesy of a Star Lake Ozzfest attendee!

One topic of conversation which came up was Ozzfest as a moneymaker. One of the increasing criticisms of Ozzfest with each passing year is the cost of attending the event. Take this year's event - \$38 for lawn seats, \$65 for pavilion seats, \$125 for pit seats. (The concert was a sellout.) Add to that \$8 a car to park (for at least 2,000 vehicles, probably a lot more), plus the overpriced concessions at Star Lake (a pounder draft of beer was \$6!) You don't have to be a certified accountant to know that somebody is raking in some major cash on this show; and the fans are shelling out some major cash to enjoy it!

Eventually, after a few hours of vigorous tailgating, we quaffed our final pre-Ozzfest brewskis and made our way into the venue. None of us was really intrigued by this year's Second Stage line-up (other than perhaps Mudvayne), so our objective was to get inside and check out the heavy hitters on the Ozzfest Main Stage. We arrived and staked out our place on the lawn area, about 2/3 of the way up the hill from the stage and just left of the center. In retrospect, we were fortunate to have lawn seats and to have this vantage point, because it afforded us a good view of the stage even when people in front of us were standing up, and it was far enough back to keep us largely out of the line of fire from idiot-launched projectiles (more on that later...).

Disturbed was underway as we arrived. Originally slated for this year's Ozzfest second stage, Disturbed did so well in the early shows of the Ozzfest tours that they

were promoted to Main Stage status. The group launched into "Voices" from their CD The Sickness shortly after we settled in. Singer David Draiman then launched into a tirade against radio pop and how rock has been cast to the backburner, exclaiming "I remember when there used to be a Headbanger's Ball!" before he and Disturbed launched into "Fear" from the CD. I saw my first projectile of the afternoon, an empty plastic water bottle, during the next song. As the group launched into their thunderous remake of Tears for Fears' "Shout," more bottles became airborne – apparently the water bottle would be this year's Ozzfest projectile of choice. As a Star Lake employee strolled through the lawn area and cooled down some fans with a water sprayer, Disturbed continued by launching into a version of Pantera's "Walk," before ending their set with their breakthrough single "Stupify."

I was impressed with Disturbed's CD, which suggested that this band is above and beyond much of the rest of the rage/angst-metal pack. And their live show further convinced me that Disturbed is the real deal. They were crisp and concise, and the songs sounded pretty close to CD quality. David Draiman's voice held up in the live setting, he could both sing and bark his words with authority. The remainder of the group was tight and muscular, and Disturbed's overall stage presentation was strong. There was a reason why they got promoted to Main Stage at Ozzfest; I think Disturbed's career could be the big beneficiary from this year's Ozzfest, just as Godsmack's and Limp Bizkit's were in previous years.

The next two Main Stage bands were Linkin Park and Papa Roach. I thought both bands did good jobs on their respective 45-minute sets. Both did their big hits – Linkin Park did their current single, "Crawling," and closed their set with their breakthrough hit "One Step Closer." Papa Roach did their breakthrough song "Last Resort" towards the end of their set, and did other songs from their CD. This day happened to be Roach frontman Coby Dick's birthday, a factoid the group touched on throughout the set, even leading the audience in a rendition of "Happy Birthday."

But while I thought both Linkin Park and Papa Roach performed well, I wasn't totally sold on either. Neither band showed a real distinguishing style or personality onstage. They both could do the rap/rage metal thing well, but both were cookie-cutter and generic. If you went into Ozzfest not knowing anything about either band, you couldn't really tell a difference between the two bands. The only thing that set them apart for me was knowing each group's radio hit – had I not heard "One Step Closer" or "Last Resort" before, I would have been hard-pressed to tell which band was which based on the rest of their respective sets. If you buy into the theory that each genre of music has its innovators and imitators, I'd have a tendency to label Disturbed one of the innovators in rage/angst metal, and Linkin Park and Papa Roach the imitators. Only time will tell whether these bands will have staying power beyond their breakthrough discs.

One thing I am quite proud of this year regarding my attendance of Ozzfest – once I was inside the Star Lake gates, I only spent \$2.50 the whole rest of the day – on a soft pretzel. I was determined not to spend megabucks on the beer, pizza, nachos and other overpriced (and actually, lackluster) food and drink. Yeah, \$2.50 is steep for a soft pretzel, but I figured given the other foodstuff alternatives, it was the least of the overpriced food evils at Star Lake.

As Schtiv D'Ump and I returned to our lawn seating area, Slipknot commenced their set. I was not very familiar with Slipknot's music prior to Ozzfest; the only song of theirs I knew was their breakthrough radio hit "Wait and Bleed." But I knew they wore costumes and face masks, and that their music was said to be brutally heavy. With their red jumpsuits and odd assortment of masks, Slipknot HAMMERED! Total obliteration rhythms and roaring power chords, vocalist Corey's bestial rabies-infested bellowing, voicing in-your-face lyrics, the occasional burst of pyro, lots of F-sharpening – this was total metal apocalypse and carnage onstage! During one pause,

Corey introduced the band, issuing their manifesto to the audience that “metal ain’t pretty, it’s UGLY F\*\*KIN’ HARDCORE!” Slipknot’s intensity and fury escalated as they proceeded through new songs like “New Abortions” and “Heretic Song,” and tunes from the album like “Spit It Out” and the hit “Wait and Bleed.”

And the audience’s intensity and fury responded in kind. The first visible moshpit of the afternoon erupted during “Purity,” and the audience onslaught began. Up until this point, the occasional empty plastic water bottle appeared to be the projectile of the day, along with empty plastic “fishbowls” the beer was served up in. Somewhere during Slipknot’s set, some genius figured out that water bottles and fishbowls flew further and landed harder when filled with dirt and stones. By the time Slipknot reached the last few songs of their set, the projectile wars were on, as full and empty water bottles and fishbowls, and a few other available projectiles, rained down, mostly from the middle and rear of the lawn seating area into the front of the lawn seating area – and the pavilion seats. It spread like “the wave” – first isolated to certain spots of the lawn area, and then quickly enveloping the entire lawn area. Fortunately, our entourage was positioned towards the rear of the lawn area, so most of the projectiles were raining down in front of us. We witnessed as rowdy fans in our vicinity began joining in the melee, including a number of women! Yellow-shirt security – hotly pursuing counterfeit shirt hucksters out in the parking lot – were almost nowhere to be found as the projectile carnage unfolded.

And unfortunately, there was carnage. After Slipknot’s set, as Schtiv and I walked to the concession area, we witnessed the walking wounded, who wound up on the receiving end of the packed projectiles. I saw one fan with a particularly nasty bloody gash on the back of his head, another girl holding her head in obvious pain. Obviously, a few fans were not having the fun they hoped to have at this year’s Ozzfest.

With the Ozzfest second stage now done for the day, the crowd population grew in front of the main stage, as Marilyn Manson took the stage.

I was intrigued with the inclusion of Marilyn Manson in this year’s Ozzfest line-up. What would Marilyn do? Would we get the full-effect legendary Manson freakshow? Would he perform lewd acts upon himself onstage? Promoting their new album, Holy Wood, Marilyn Manson did several new songs from that album, including “The Fight Song” and the title track. Along the way, we heard other familiar Manson titles such as “The Dope Show,” the title track from Antichrist Superstar, and “The Beautiful People” to end the set – with mass feedback and a metal crucifix adorning the stage. Other noteworthy happenings during Marilyn Manson’s set included Marilyn – clad in revealing leather bondage gear – sticking the microphone up his bare ass in full view on the jumbotron (a bit too much information for me), and parading the stage atop huge mechanized stilts during one song. During “Antichrist Superstar,” the pyro was blindingly bright. Definitely if you are a fan of theatrics and stage props, Marilyn Manson has lots to offer – the overall effect of the visual side of Manson’s set suggested a cross between Alice Cooper and an S&M show. Musically, though I am not a big fan of Manson’s music or albums, I thought the group executed very well onstage. They were tight and explosive on their instruments, and Marilyn himself sounded true to form on the vocal end. Marilyn Manson sounded close to CD quality during their set, and along with all the theatrics, delivered a memorable Ozzfest set. Admittedly, I was impressed.

Besides the projectile fest that had continued off and on since Slipknot’s set, there was the other noteworthy Stupid Human Trick I will forever remember this Ozzfest for. It happened during the beginning of Black Sabbath’s set (at least as I recall, it may have been the end of Manson’s set). As we are standing in the rear of the lawn area, a large, rotund woman walked over and positioned herself in front of us. She had a 4 or 5-year-old child with her. First question – what the hell is a kid

that young doing at OZZFEST!? With flying water bottles and fishbowls airborne around her, the woman proceeded to pick the kid up and hoist it on her shoulders – perhaps as a human shield? Incredible! But the clincher – the woman then reached into her purse, pulled out a joint, and lit it up! Nothing like turning the kid onto pot fumes at an early age, eh? Our whole entourage stared at this living piece of human excrement in total disbelief! Two ladies standing to our left did something about it – they began tossing empty water bottles off the woman’s butt and yelling abuse at her. The woman was oblivious to her critics, initially shrugging off the projectiles and the comments directed at her, but eventually turning and walking away from our area – with Junior still on her shoulders. Thus fueling the adage – anybody can have kids, but not anybody can be a parent (that is, provided the kid was actually hers).

Anyway, Ozzfest had come down to the headliners, Black Sabbath. This would be my ninth time witnessing his Ozzness, Ozzy Osbourne, both solo and with Black Sabbath. How would he sound? Would his voice hold out? What about his aging bandmates? And how deep into the Sabbath catalog would Ozzy, Iommi, Butler and Ward dig this night? We would find out shortly.

Intermission following Marilyn Manson hadn’t lasted too long when an Ozzy Osbourne/Black Sabbath video montage started showing on the jumbotron, bringing the Ozzfest crowd back to life. The various animation and anthology footage lasted a few minutes, before Ozzy and Sabbath came out to the stage and the crowd roared approval. With water hoses above the stage wetting down the stagefront “pit” crowd, Black Sabbath kicked off with “N.I.B.” It was a slow start for Ozzy, whose voice sounded rough in the early going. Then, as the group started “Snowblind,” Ozzy’s voice had begun to clear up, but the sound system started experiencing problems, with frequent cutting out. This lasted most of the song, and we were wondering what was happening – the sound system worked perfectly all day for the other bands, but was crapping out for the headliners – what gives?

Fortunately, by “Snowblind’s” end, the sound problems appeared to be rectified, and Ozzy addressed the crowd in his usual fashion – which in recent performances has been summed up in five words – “I CAN’T F\*\*KING HEAR YOU!” After the second or third time, I was starting to mutter under my breath, “Then get a damn hearing aid, old man!” Seriously, though, Ozzy then introduced Sabbath’s recent new original tune, “Scary Dreams,” and we witnessed an incredible Tony Iommi guitar solo during this tune. As Black Sabbath’s set continued to unfold, I was more and more impressed by Ozzy’s bandmates – Iommi, bassist Geezer Butler and drummer Bill Ward were pouring heart and soul into this set; they were obviously glad to be back in action onstage! Ozzy then took the opportunity to jokingly chastise a rowdy female fan in the front row, bringing the lady onstage and sending her backstage as apparent “punishment” for being unruly. Ozzy and Sabbath then commenced “War Pigs” – the performance itself was excellent, but the addition of war footage on the jumbotron gave the tune added effect. This was followed by “Iron Man” and “Into The Void.” Ozzy then introduced something from very early in Black Sabbath’s career, digging back to the first album for “The Wizard” – and we got to see Ozzy blowing harp on the song’s lead-in. The group then continued to recall their first album with their title song “Black Sabbath.” Sabbath then brought the tempo back up by firing into “Paranoid,” before ending their set with “Children of the Grave.”

At this point, a bit of a disappointment, as the house lights came up! No encore! Given the amount of pot fumes wafting around the concert grounds, I thought an encore of “Sweet Leaf” might have been appropriate, but nothing! Black Sabbath played maybe an hour at best. Why no encore? Was it the long day, was it Ozzy not feeling well (or his voice experiencing fatigue)? Rather surprised by the sudden end of Ozzfest, we made our way out of the venue and to our car in the upper lot (which

took forever because the police and security were holding everybody up to let cars out of the lot).

We arrived back at our vehicle at about the same time as part of the Grimm contingent arrived at theirs. I spoke with Grimm frontman Bob Lee, and learned his Ozzfest experience wasn't a pleasant one. As he sat in the pavilion area, he was the recipient of some wayward hard-hitting projectiles from the lawn area; and Bob expressed that this would be his last Ozzfest. And who could blame him – why pay \$65 for a pavilion seat only to have imbeciles hit you in the back of the head with flying debris from the lawn area? I would hear this story a few more times in the following days from Ozzfest attendees – obviously the flying projectile problem at Ozzfest has gotten very out of hand and needs remedied. Concert promoters and Star Lake officials need to take action to curtail the projectile problem, or Ozzfest's crowds are going to continue to diminish as more people fall victim to injuries – or worse! Perhaps borrow a page from the organizers of Rolling Rock Town Fair, and serve beverages in paper cups, and restrict beer consumption during Ozzfest to the fairways off the main concert grounds.

The tale of the tape for Ozzfest 2001 – as the music went, what I got to see of Ozzfest was respectable. I was disappointed at Black Sabbath's short set with no encore, though what they did perform was excellent once they cleared the first two songs. I was very impressed with Marilyn Manson, Slipknot and Disturbed; and Linkin Park and Papa Roach were respectable at least. As the behavior of the audience went, moronic behavior is becoming more of a problem with this event, and if left unchecked, could be the ultimate undoing of Ozzfest – especially if somebody is badly injured or killed by flying debris and lawsuits come into play.

With Ozzy Osbourne set to release his next solo album this fall, I would expect there will be an Ozzfest 2002 next year in support of the album (even though Ozzy keeps saying he is done touring, yadda yadda yadda yeah right). I expect I will probably again be in attendance, but definitely I want lawn seats, and not pavilion!

## **FROM BENEATH THE BAR**

*Gigging and Swigging with D'Scribe*

### **KEYSTONE ALL STARS/TEN SENT WINGS/FULL TIME KINGS @ MAGOO'S, CRESSON 1/12/01**

For those who didn't know it, this area's punk rock scene is very much alive and well, as I was able to observe during this fun triple-bill in Cresson.

The occasion – three of this area's best punk bands, the Keystone All Stars, Ten Sent Wings and Full Time Kings whooping it up at Magoo's in Cresson on the first night this venue had reopened after a legal battle with their previous owner. The bar was happy to be open, and the bands were happy to have this occasion to celebrate their music and camaraderie. The combination of these factors made for quite the party...

I arrived while Full Time Kings were underway. A good-sized crowd was already on hand – including Magoo's regulars happy to have the room back open again, and fans of the three bands in the house to celebrate the music and drink beer. (I would find out this night, the local punks and their fans love their beer!) Speaking of beer, I procured my first Genesee of the night, and found a vantage point halfway back from the stage.

It had been a while since the last time I saw the Full Time Kings – actually, since last spring, when Jon Flude was still their frontman. Playing as a three-piece, The Kings – with guitarist Ben Dumm handling lead vocals, Johnny Leatherjacket on bass and Jimmy Dickman on drums – introduced a number of new tunes this night, and

threw in a remake from the Dictators. The Kings slammed with much velocity, but managed to keep it tight on their instruments. And just like the song material from their Jailtown Redemption CD, the Kings' new songs were simple and catchy. The group was firing pretty well despite having just lost a member, and got this show off to a strong start.

There wasn't too long a layover between Full Time Kings and the next band of the night, Ten Sent Wings. I had just seen Ten Sent Wings for my very first time just two nights before at Crowbar in State College, opening for Dragon Fire during the latter's post Farmclub.com taping party. Ten Sent Wings played a pretty good set at Crowbar, and I was interested to see if the band would unveil anything new during this set.

Ten Sent Wings blazed through their set of mostly original songs, introducing a few new ones along the way, such as "Another Day" and "On and On." I was still getting acquainted with their songlist, so I didn't know too many of the tunes except for "13 Candles," which I played recently on Q94's "Backyard Rocker." Ten Sent Wings also did a high-octane version of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues," and towards set's end pulled out Motorhead's "Riding with the Driver." Like the Full Time Kings before them, Ten Sent Wings also were able to maintain a high-velocity clip on their instruments yet keep it tight. Grant Matthews' voice didn't sound especially clear in the sound mix, but it was passable. I still liked what I heard from Ten Sent Wings, and more importantly, so did the audience.

Including one crazed fan who would become a sideshow attraction this night. Ten Sent Wings dubbed this fan "Crazy Guy;" he wore black leather duds, slicked black hair and sideburns like Elvis Presley, so I dubbed this fan 'Elvis.' A couple of songs into Ten Sent Wings' set, Elvis took to the dance floor, first grooving and moving about in front of the stage, and then doing somersaults from the stage onto the dance floor – what a nut! Elvis soon had me laughing my ass off with his crazed, apparently drunken antics. And apparently a friend of the bands, no attempt was made to curtail Elvis or his antics.

Magoo's was still pretty busy as Ten Sent Wings exited the stage and the Keystone All Stars set up. I had not seen Keystone All Stars before, and as drummer Chris O'Leary was one of my Q94 co-workers (in sales, not on the air), I was curious to see what Keystone All Stars brought to the table.

Like the first two bands, Keystone All Stars too were rapidfire in their delivery, but their melodies were a little more defined. The All Stars – singer/guitarist Brian Dumm, bassist Rik Sylvania, guitarist Gig and drummer Chris – played numerous original songs, including some from their soon-to-be-released new CD. They also did songs such as "Blue Collar Workers," "Serial Lover," along with punkish treatments of Lita Ford's "Kiss Me Deadly" and Bryan Adams' "Summer of '69 ('89)." Besides slamming out the tunes, Keystone All Stars generated the party, and had the dance floor busy during most of their set – including Elvis doing the jig, and the audience stepping onstage to help the band sing their finale, "7-10 Split."

An additional highlight of the Keystone All Stars' presentation is the introduction of their special road crew member, the "Keystone Beer Star" – whose sole purpose is to refuel drummer Chris O'Leary with brewski served from a beer bong while Chris is performing! The "Beer Star" does this several times per set – hey, when you need refueled with beer, you need refueled with beer! Why don't more bands utilize this innovation?

This was a damned good party – the bands all slammed and kicked butt, the atmosphere was charged the whole night, and the fans had a great time. It was a fun show, and just the good-time blast Central PA needed as the doldrums of winter set in.



**The Keystone All Stars.**

## **RADIOACTIVE**

*Bitching about my line of work by D'Scribe*

AS MANY PEOPLE READING THIS LIKELY KNOW, my "day job" is being an afternoon radio announcer on Q94, the Classic Rock Station. MAJOR SCANDALOUS REVELATION: I listen to other radio stations besides the one I work for. Hey, think of it this way...If you work 8 hours a day at a pizza shop, when you go home from work do you go eat pizza? Likely not. If you spend 8 hours a day in front of a computer screen at your day job, do you sit in front of a computer at night when you aren't at work? Probably not, unless you are a fanatical 'puter geek. For me, after spending 4-6 hours a day listening to and playing classic rock for my paycheck, do I want to listen to Skynyrd and Zeppelin when I'm off duty? No, unless I'm in a special mood for it. So I tune around the dial a little bit to see what's up. Often it's sports, and I listen to WVAM to catch my daily fix of Romie and The Jungle (The Jim Rome Show for those not versed in Jungle schmack). And to get caught up on what's new in rock, I do tune across QWK-Rock and The Revolution.

I often listen to QWK, Revolution or Pittsburgh's DVE when I'm doing my PA Musician delivery runs every month (usually when I get out of Q94's and WVAM's transmitter ranges). On Jan. 6, I had journeyed to State College to pick up the January issues of PA Musician to distribute, and as I usually lose Q94's signal after passing Port Matilda, I tuned in QWK-Rock. Little did I know what surprise awaited me and everyone else listening that Saturday afternoon...

I actually learned a few weeks prior that QWK-Rock was planning to go automated on the weekends, i.e. have a computer run their station Saturdays and Sundays. As I would eventually learn from tuning in QWK this day, this meant that QWK was laying off all their part-time weekend announcers. Sucks for them to be sure, but sadly this is a part of the modernization of the radio business; I fell victim to such a layoff myself at my former radio employer before Q94.



Anyway, I tuned in as Benny Love was on the air. To be honest, I was never a fan of this guy's show; I found his style annoying to listen to and I usually hastily tuned him out. But as I tuned in this day, something was different. Some obscure Grateful Dead-type jam was playing, usually not something you often hear on QWK-Rock (which to those outside this area, plays current rock from Limp Bizkit, Korn, Blink 182, etc.). This was followed by another obscure-sounding jam, which Benny identified as one of the local State College jam bands. Interesting. Benny called this show the "Lost Weekend," and then played "Southbound" by the Allman Brothers. WHAT!? Since when did QWK-Rock EVER play the Allman Brothers? I was hooked – what was up?

As the afternoon unfolded, Benny did total free-form radio, and by the time all was said and done, he had played everything from the Allman Brothers to Marvin Gaye to M.C. 900 Foot Jesus to Dizzy Gillespie to Sly & the Family Stone, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones and many other off-the-wall, way-out-of-QWK-Rock's-normal-format artists. We would learn this was Benny's final show before the layoff, and by some strange anomaly, he and the other part-timers this day were permitted to vent their frustrations, musically and otherwise, and exit with a bang! I imagine some QWK listeners tuned out, but I was intrigued. Benny Love was baring his musical soul for all to hear, playing the music HE wanted to play this afternoon, and raging against the corporate machine that was terminating his employment. I listened, curious to hear what was next.

As someone who works in radio, I think I probably speak for 99% of the announcers in this business when I say that one of our dream wishes is to do a show where we get to play the music we WANT to play, not the music we're required to play to earn our paychecks. On this afternoon, the last show in his QWK-Rock career, Benny Love was getting to do this. And as such, in my opinion, this was the freshest-sounding 5 hours of radio I have heard in this area since my college radio days at Penn State's WDFM. I didn't like every song selection Benny played this afternoon, but that wasn't the point – I didn't have to. I just respected and admired that Benny was sharing his diverse musical interests with us; something I wish I could do once in a while. It was personal radio, Benny Love living his musical fantasies for all to hear. With this last great act of radio defiance, Benny Love and QWK were providing the real "Revolution" this afternoon, as he and the station's disgruntled part-timers were baring their souls and their dissatisfaction with the situation leading to their unemployment. (The guy who came on after Benny started his show with the Backstreet Boys and Ricky Martin, and did a talk break in Spanish!) Radio anarchy. A thing of beauty.

To Benny Love – while I admittedly wasn't a fan of your three years at QWK-Rock, you won my respect with that last show. Thanks for giving us a dose of fresh free form radio. And you're right – corporate radio IS evil.

## **WE GET LETTERS**

*A visit to the Cut mailbag...*

### **DEAR SPARKY D'ENGINEER:**

Since my broadcasting career with the XFL is now shot to hell, I was wondering...Is hell exothermic or endothermic? And support your answer with proof. – THE RIGHT HONORABLE GUV'NOR JESSE

### **SPARKY RESPONDS:**

First we must postulate that if souls exist, then they must have some mass.

So, at what rate are souls moving into hell and at what rate are souls leaving? i.e. what is the rate of change of mass of hell. I think that we can assume that once a soul gets to hell, it will not leave. Eternal damnation is pretty much final. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for souls entering hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today.

Many of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to hell. Since there are more than one of these religions, and people generally do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that everyone is damned by lack of adherence to one religion or another, and so all people and all souls go to hell.

With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in hell, and therefore its mass, to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change in volume in hell. Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in hell to stay the same, the ratio of the mass (of souls) and the volume needs to stay constant. We arrive therefore at two possible hypotheses :

1. If hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter hell, then the temperature and pressure in hell will increase until all hell breaks loose.
2. On the other hand, if hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by our new intern at the Mill Hall station that:

"It'll be a cold night in hell before I sleep with you" ...

and take into account the fact that I still have not succeeded in having sexual relations with her, then Hypothesis 2. cannot be true.

Hence,

hypothesis 1. must be correct: Hell is exothermic.

**THE FINAL CUT** is recklessly spewed from an emotionally and physically abused computer in an inner sanctum in the heart of Northeast Altoona, PA. The opinions spouted off with total disregard for the feelings or weak emotional stability of lesser beings are solely those of D'Scribe (Jim Price), D'Drummer (Kevin Siegel), Da Boy (Mark Wesesky), D'Ranter, Schtiv D'Ump (formerly the Friendly Sebastiano's Doorman), D'Pebble, Sparky D'Engineer and any other mentally unstable riff-raff with an axe to grind, and do not reflect the opinions, attitudes, or massive corporate policies of WBXQ/WBRX, Majic 104-Dot-9, 3-W-S, Coconuts Music & Movies, PA Musician, Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys, families, friends, acquaintances, pets, the Monday night Pellegrine's wing-eating think tank, other local bands, insects, mold and related spores, radio station prize pigs and other lower life forms, Claudio at City Limits, Big John and Jodie K at Peter C's, the Miller, Genesee, or Heineken Brewing Companies, the makers of Rupleminz, Jim Rome, the Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Nissan, and Harley-Davidson Companies, all national record companies and

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