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ChDCiDE

ACCUSED, AGGRESSION BORN AGAINST, FASTBACKS GLYCINE MAX, HUNGER FARM KILLING JOKE, LOOMPANICS ULTD. SKINNY PUPPY, WEATHER BELL Young, enthusiastic, and good looking , Born Against are a determined lot who produce one fuck of a hellbent sound. One of the few current hardcore bands worth

smelling. Photos by Krk. Coreographed by Sterling. Interview by Dan O. and Krk.

Krk: What's it like hanging out with Dan 0? (O'Mahoney).

Sam: Dan has the ability to make these colossal noises when he farts. We were just discussing this.

Adam: I give his English a ten. Sam: I can produce the smells, but I can't make the noise. Adam: His cheeks reverberate.

Sam: Now I know why his dog looks so sad.

Krk: It's good to see you have a sense of humor. On stage you look like you're gonna break a guitar over someone's head. You guys look pretty angry up there. Everyone: Really !?!

Adam: If things are going bad technically, we just laugh (sarcastically) we try to make mean New York faces

Sam: I guess we're a lot goofier in New York.

Adam: Yeah, we're goofy in New York cause we play for the same crowd. They know all of our songs and they're bored shitless ... and we're bored shitless. Ya gotta like roll on the floor and stuff. It's good to roll on the floor no matter where you are, but you have to do a lot more in New York because everyone has seen us so many times.

Krk: Hardcore bands don't usually appeal to me, but you guys seem to pull older influences and seem a lot more sincere.

Adam: This is the stock answer: even if our musical sound isn't like the older bands, we think, if we are coming off more sincere, we think it's because the things we share in common with those bands from that bygone era, we feel totally out of place. They felt that way in soci-

ety in general, we feel that way in society in general, but also within the context of the music.

Sam: These people are a lot more interested in having friends and being comfortable and not criticizing anyone and being popular. Our #1 goal in this band is making really ugly music that normal people will not in anyway relate to.

Adam: But it's not even only that. Our common ground with some of those older bands might be that... Black Flag were a bunch of skinny losers, whimpy people that practiced in their basement all the time ... we're just the same kind of people I'd imagine ... creepy don't-fit-in type of people.

Krk: How does the whole hatecore thing come in? When I went to New York I noticed that there were 2 or 3 different things that were happening in hardcore.

Sam: I don't really understand the hatecore thing except maybe it's trying to rationalize being big and aggressive and stuff. We're aggressive musically - I guess that might be one faction of it. A lot of people seem to lump the ABC No Rio crowd into another faction. Although that's been miss labeled. A lot of people call it the goofy segment. We have been tagged with that ABC goofy thing - us, Rorschach and Citizens Arrest.

Adam: None of us are goofy.

Dan O .: When people hear Born Against it immediately brings ABC to mind. Is there really a heavy level of

BORN AGAI

Dan 0.: I would have considered you a political band. Adam: We have a sense of humor. You should have heard us on KXLU on the air not wearing a stitch of clothing.

Sam: There are a lot of Peace Punk bands in New York that come off very dry, very humorless and the come off in a very dry, very insulting kind of way. They don't take their audience very seriously.

Adam: Not only New York. All Peace Punk bands in general.... Once a band from New York gets big elsewhere they just say good bye to New York. Once the Cromags got big they never played New York. Youth of Today. Murphys Law never play New York. Even Sick of It All ... maybe at the Ritz.

Sam: Once that straight edge thing collapsed, about a year ago. In a two or three month period CBGB's said "Fuck it, we're not going to do matinees anymore", then Mike Bullshit started ABC No Rio. There was a real small percentage of people that got into hardcore about 5 or 6 years ago ... very influenced by New York. Once all that Revelation stuff crapped out we didn't want to start smoking, slicking our hair back ... being into the whole rock trip a lot of the Revelation bands are into, other people too. We weren't into the progression that was offered to us. We weren't into the Faith No More - Chili Peppers shit that was offered us. We don't want a ponytail, New Music Seminars crap. We are into the punk rock ideals.

Krk: So Dan, how long have these guys been hanging out with you?

Dan O .: They got in last weekend. The house smells a lot different. Javier: The van smelled of road trip.

Sam: The neighbors lawn is dying. The van is no longer a happy place. John: It's just a coincidence, we get booked there. Adam: We really don't do enough for ABC No Rio. Me and

Adam: Our drummer was dubbed with a new name. He is no longer John, he is now Smell.

John: I didn't change my clothes or even shower for 5 days.

Adam: And he slept next to the heater in the van. Krk: You really are a political band?

John: That's one of the things I'd say we try to avoid, the tag of "Political" - the totally humorless aspect of a political band.

Sam: Yeah, fuck that.

John: You know dead straight faced about everything. Sam: Some of the most effective political bands that I really like, which the people in this band can stand, like Crucifix, Feederz and the Dead Kennedys... the people had such a brutal biting sense of humor and they used it totally to their advantage - very effective.

Krk: What do you think of Jello being on Ice T's album? Sam: That's the kind of weird I wasn't sure what to think. Adam: He can do whatever he wants, he's Jello! Krk: He's flexible. (Haha) How many records do you think you've sold? Two singles?

BRAN

tional hooking up. There's always someone there from Europe... Spain... We have to get more involved with that place

interaction between club and band?

Sam: Probably one of the reasons people have started this ABC No Rio tag classification is lumping us with bands like Go! Go! is a good band but is nothing like what we are doing. They sound different.

Javier have been to 3 or 4 of the weekly meetings and every

once in awhile we work the door. But we just don't do

enough. They built a stage, a sound board, they sell a lot

of European records, tapes, zines, they do a lot of interna-

Krk: Mike Bullshit?

Adam: Started the place.

Sam: I think a lot of people don't know where we fit in so they lump us with that ABC classification. Like Adam said, we don't fit in. We're not a straight edge band ... that sounds really dumb because I know a lot of bands that don't like to label themselves, but the difference with us is we have gone consciously out of our way to alienate ourselves from every possible group.

John: Probably a thousand.

Sam: Of the "Eulogy" record that came with my fanzine "Dear Jesus", that sold a thousand.

Adam: We've probably sold 1300 by now.

Sam: The EP, which just came out, which had many many fuck-ups including being advertised 4 months in advance.

Adam: We will never do that again. We apologize, we fucked up with the pressing plant.

Sam: And the place that made the covers. The covers were totally butchered, diarrhea, sucked shit, so the thing was badly delayed. We have 2000. We only got rid of 300. We got it the week before we left.

John: "Murders Among Us" we sold 2000 of.

Sam: That's a comp with us and Nausea, Absolution and Adams old band, Life's Blood.

Krk: With that many records out, how big of a dent do you expect to make in the whole punk rock circuit? Expecting to change the world, what's running thru your heads?

Adam: Not "change the world", just make 'em think a little. Sam: Being an effective band is a really weird thing. I know a lot of bands that have had great things to say but didn't really make a dent. Then take a band like Youth of Today. which did have good things to say but almost everything they were about was a total rehash of things other bands did. They changed the face of a lot of stuff, for good or bad that's up to the people's judgement. They made an enormous difference in the course of what was going on in New York. More than once. And Ray is doing it again right now, in a way that I would definitely call extremely bad. It's hard to say! People reward stupidity with large sums of cash. I don't know if they are going to be into what we are doing because it isn't the same, but more intelligent than a lot of other things going on right now. Maybe that egotistical

Adam: I wouldn't go as far as to say it's more intelligent. It seems that way to us because we think we're so smart. Sam: I guess that is a pretty wise ass thing to say.. Adam: Sam is pretty much a wise ass.

Sam: I have a pretty big ego.

Krk: I think that YOT just came along at the right time. Sam: Some of it is timing.

Krk: Because right now there is a big flood of that straight edge stuff and none of them are doing shit.

Adam: They also sold an image. If you look at the four of us there is no image to be sold.

Sam: There is with you. You're covered with tattoos and you're all grimy!

Adam: Of yeah! But the three of you aren't. There is no image to Born Against. There is no successful marketing we could use based on our own actual image. Except for Javier's bottom which is sweet!

Sam: There is a couple of times when I thought there was some weird stuff going on timing wise, cause we seem to have generated a lot of attention by certain issues we talk about; reproductive rights for women, our opposition to organized religion. This stuff has been talked about and talked about but no one is doing it right now. No one is saying "Fuck you" to the Christians, the Moslems. No one in general is saying that they dislike major labels. Maybe for that whole thing we got attention. For being extremely loud mouthed about it when nobody else was.

Adam: It's not necessarily that we were being opportunists. It's just that we felt it was time to be loud mouthed about these things regardless what point in time it was in the "scene".

Krk: So basically, things are going pretty well? Sam: We're in California! Yeah! We had a really dry spell for awhile, we didn't have a bass player or a drummer. Adam: All of our friends thought that we were going to break up.



Krk: How long have you been together?

Sam: 2 years. The last 6 months have been very productive. We are very stable right now.

Krk: I never read the lyrics or look at the image/cover. I listen to it. If I like it, I'll investigate it.

Adam: That's what I do too! There's peace punk bands, I love what they say but the music doesn't happen. There's some Crass albums that just sit there. I thought the cover was cool, brought it home, the lyrics are cool, but the album sits there.

Sam: The medium really is the message. Hardcore/punk rock is really a threatening form of music. I mean threatening in... not for people to go crazy and turn over cop cars in the streets.

Adam: Although that would be a great party!

Sam: But if you take this home to someone's parents they're going to be like "Oh God, this is horrible!" Adam: "Are you in a cult?"

Sam: That's a good thing, to make normal people alienated. Normal people need to be pissed on, shocked and disturbed by this form of music. And yeah, I'll listen to a record and if it's just boring ass Emo-crap punk retro garbage then whatever the packaging is... it doesn't matter.

Dan 0.: You just described a sound there. And that's totally...

Adam: You can't say that Sam... you can say whatever you want but I think you have to take it band by band or individual by individual... you can't say "All that Emo-shit" because, like I don't want to get redundant... When Kent McClard (All The Answers fanzine) interviewed us he asked us about that shit. I was just going to say... he said that exact same thing "that Emo-shit". I would not consider Embrace or Ignition shit. And he wouldn't either.

Sam: Retro Emo-shit I would say, because I fuckin' love Emo, uh, Embrace. (Ha ha ha ha...) There's good Emo and bad Emo.

Adam: But then again, Ian MacKaye or Chris Bald will tell you there is no such thing as Emo. (A moment of silence)... Krk: Uh, Dan, this is your interview!

Dan 0.: Oh? It is! I'm kind of surprized, you guys seem to be very concerned on where you sit in the hardcore scene. I figured when you guys got interviewed you would become immediately topical?!

Adam: I agree. It's kind of trivial and stupid. We're just into it cuz... I think it's a problem we're into that... where we stand in the hardcore scene. We can piss so many people off. In a way it's probably as stupid as "who can mosh the hardest." In a way, pissing people off is good. To make people think of what they are doing instead of continuing. There is also a massive rut by becoming too topical. Like "this song is about... abortion is terrible and abortion should be free to everyone on the planet. This song is about world starvation... the cows eat the grain, the kids can't eat the grain and everyone starves, that's why no one

should eat meat." Sam: It's been said a million times.

Krk: Preaching to the converted... John: I used to think the same thing but I was reading through an old issue of Endless Struggle recently, and it just changed my mind way back. "If punk was preaching to the converted, then nobody would be eating at McDonalds. Nobody would be wearing leather." In that sense, it's not preaching to the converted.

Adam: Also we must be giving people too much credit, cuz we, everyone in the band thinks it's sort of an insult to try to present a massive topic to people, like world

starvation, in the space of a 5 song 7".

Sam: We get weird interviews. Other bands get interviews like "What was you tour like?", we get asked like legislation and what do you think of the medical industry. Adam: That's cool.

Dan 0.: How much of the mechanics of the band were you able to bank roll because of the financial state of your family. You seem to be very against profit motivated hardcore but you are in a better position to survive by your standards...

Adam: The only way we can weasel out of that one is because I know for a fact because I've been into hardcore and I'm not an ignoramus that they people we might yell "you scumbag, taking the easy way out" they are in the same position. We try to help out as many people as we can.

Sam: Without getting into all of the nitty gritty of it... some of Vermiform was formed out of an infusion out of a weird family thing in which I came out with some money. I think a lot of the big punk labels, that's how they started. That's how Taang! Records got started. Even though I know Dischord had their financial problems, a lot of the Dischord people came from families with big bucks. Sad to say, but hardcore is now a movement of affluent white upper middle class kids. And some of us have been a part of that but I don't think that has reduced our effectiveness at all. Again, if you've got money, that's not a bad thing as long as you use it for the right stuff. Don't be a fuckin' asshole with it

Dan 0.: That helps me with my question. You are in a position to come from money and move away from it. Do you really think it is your right to condemn people coming without money and trying to use music to move towards money?

Sam: If they are making people eat shit while they're doing it, then yes. totally!

Adam: I was in Life's Blood and nobody had money for anything. We practiced at Giant Studio which is the worst studio in New York. It bulges in the ceiling where big drops of water come down when you're playing stuff. And Life's Blood did it right, we didn't play the goddamned Ritz. This guy Dave Stein put out our record on Combined Effort. The whole thing was totally grass roots and we didn't jerk anybody around. Some of our equipment sounded like a wet fart and a rusty sink but a lot of people liked Life's Blood and the only reason we broke up was personal reasons. We didn't fail because we ran out of money. You can run it on faith for a long time. If you want it to workyou can make it work. There are bands out there in New York like Agnostic Front, none of them even had homes and they were putting out an album. If you have perseverance, you can do it.



Born Against Interviewed St. Patty's day 1991 MRR: So how was California?

Javier: Rad as piss. Adam: Rad as piss, dude. It was cool. Southern California. Is: about: a million times more suburban than I thought it would be, at least Orange County which is kind of gross. But Northern California is...

John: A wet dream of sorts. Adam: Yeah.

Sam: After war broke out, that was the place we were going to head to if the shit hit the fan. MRR: Were you suprised at the reception you got, considering that you're from 3,000 miles away and didn't have vinyl out for that long beforehand?

Adam: I still don't understand how a lot of people have heard of us. Because, you know, we've only sold a couple of thousand records so far. And there were a lot of people, even in California, that knew the words to our songs. I think that's testimony to the fact that there's maybe a real underground resurgence, that people are actually seeking out things that they want to listen to or people that're saying things that they're interested in hearing. And that they're not just picking up the newest crud release that everybody's everybody's supposed to like.

MRR: Any comparisons between the politics of The Bay Area and New York? Adam: Well, the only thing I'd bring up about Northern California politics is that it seems like you gotta be careful in that it would be dangerous to live there for your own mental health, because you might lose sight of the enemy and what you're fighting against. Everything in North California seems almost handed to you in terms of political

correctness. Sam: Yeah, It seems very cool but very safe. Adam: In New York, no matter how politically correct a certain small community of anarchistsis, it's much more wacko. Like, I was in an animal rights group and we were standing on a picket line in the middle of Manhaftan and this one woman who's standing right next to me, this old woman, goes "Oh, look at that awful liberal scum wearing that fur coat! All the liberals wear fur coats!" So I think New York is much more a mixed bag of nut cases. MRR: Define "the enemy" that you talk about.

Sam: The enemy is like that show we played in Middletown New Jersey. It was filled with about over a hundred jock hardcore kids wearing "Desert Storm" t-shirts and yellow ribbons. High evil content

Adam: I think that a whole bunch of bands that are around today try to distance themselves, or make their "enemy" some imaginary thing or some giant abstract concept like "the system". But fuck, if those people at that show weren't our enemy then no one is.

Sam: It was just our good luck that they were all to stupid to realize that what we were saying was a direct fuck you. Adam: Yeah, we wouldn't have come home

with a van.

MRR: Is your goal to drive them away from your shows or to convert them?

Adam: No, it wouldn't be

any fun if we drove them away. I don't want to speak for everyone, but it wouldn't be any fun if we converted them all and if we drove them all away then we wouldn't get paid for any of our shows.

sorn against

MRR: Well do you think that that kind of audience is more effective for you to get your message across to - the 'converted' message across to - the 'conve audience like ABC No Rio or the 'nonconveted' audience at places like that pizza place? Adam: Auhhh..

Sam: Thiskid came up to me at the end of that particular show and he was wearing a flight acket with a yellow ribbon, and an "I support Desert Storm" button, and he had a big grin and he shook my hand and said "great set man!". At first I was really pissed at myself that I had taken part in that night's entertainment for a bunch of rednecks.

Adam's rear end: Bbbppppppt11111111

Sam: ...thank you. But uh, I was really pissed at myself that I apparently hadn't said the right things. The more I thought about it, however, if that person goes and buys our record and digests the lyrics and what we're trying to get across with our graphics then I guess we've done good. If one person at that show was in even the slightest way inspired by us to destroy their Deserf Storm paraphenalia then that would be a good thing. A lot of people have accused us of "preaching to the converted", but hardcore 1991 is as boring, conservative and limp as top 40.

MRR: Why was there such long wait before you

got vinyl out? Adam: Because we fucked up. Because we did it like most bands - you record the music, then you sit on the music for a couple of weeks or months, then you start thinking about layout, then it takes a while to get the layout done, then it takes a while at the printers...

Javier: Then they screw up your covers. Adam: If we do everything right with this album we're about to record then we'll have the artwork completed simultaneously with the recording

Sam: Lots of early line-up changes as well. Members came and went for our first year. Those were fun, joyous days,

Adam: Things are much smoother now. New songs can be written in days instead of months

MRR: It's obvious from your records that you're against Krishna. But having a stance against organized religion and having a stance against religion are two different things. What're all the band member's personal feelings about religion? John: I harbor an infense hatred of all religions.

It doesn't get much deeper than that. Javier: I go to church every Sunday. John: Yeah, yeah.

Javier: Because when I'm thirsty I drink the holy water.

Sam: Uh

Javier: I crucified Jesus.

Adam: I had my eyes opened a little bit when this kid Rob, who lived in the Krishna temple and was a devotee, had a long conversation

with me

about It. It was interesting that he listened to and respected what I had to say. And because he was like that I did him the same courtesy. He was very important and interesting for me to listen to and form opinions on Krishna, because if I had just written him off by saying "Oh, he's just a stupid posi-kid who's a Krishna, screw him", then I wouldn't have had the benefit of talking to someone with his experiences. He told me a lot of interesting things, like how a close relative of his was dying and the Krishnasjust came right out and said that it was because his relative's "soul" has done something bad in a past life. I personally don't abhor all facets of religion on the same arm I have a tattoo of a bishop smashing a guy over the head with a cross and a tattoo of the human with the animal's head killing the animal with the human's head

- a widely used Krishna graphic. Even with Christianity, something like liberation theology Isn't perfect, but for peasants in Guatemala or Honduras, that's all they have to hold on to. In

that case, religion becomes rebellion. Sam: One of the reasons I think we're so opposed to religion is that we're so open minded in the first place. Maybe there is a god, but I'm sure as fuck not going to lead my life according to a narrow set of rules that tell me that I have to worship a male authority figure and pray other people's structured prayers. People call us blanket atheists all the

John: I just prefer to Ignore religion and questions of religion in general.

MRR: With the uprising of silliness at ABC No Rio, you've been crificized as a band that takes themselves much too seriously...

Adam: They must be paranoid, because Sam plays shows with guarters taped to his forehead and we're one of the slopplest. most unprofessional pieces of shit when it comes to playing live.

Sam: There are a couple of our earlier shows at ABC where I came off as being too serious. Adam: Ah, I hope in the future that BORN AGAINST dosen't care about what other people think about us.

Javier: We could care less.

Adam: Yeah, Imean there's silly bands at ABC No Rio and we're best friends with lots of people in the silly bands and they're best friends with us...

John:...and we badmouth each other to death.

Adam: Right. And our friendships are strong enough that it's not a big deal at all. Sam: Because that's what it's all about, man, friendship. It's like our song "Friendship", on our album "Bonds of Togetherness"... Javier: Stop, I'm about to cry

MRR: One thing this band seems to do a lot of is "talk shit" about lots of other bands and people... what makes you so much better than your peers?

Adam: What makes ME better? The massive

size of my schwanze. MRR: What I'm trying to get at is what's your side of the WNYU debate between yourselves

INTERVIEWS

the ABC No Rio thing, where do you see yourselves in that whole scene? Adam: Probably the biggest, best, most powerful band. (chuckles)

Javier: Yeah, we're worshipped there. (laughs)

Adam: No, uh, I think that people look on us, musically, much in the same way that look at CITIZENS ARREST. I think that a lot of people might think that we have good music but that we can't get our shift together live a lot of times. Sam: Yeah, we've been disgraceful at some shows.

Adam: And our best friends in CITIZENS ARREST have been capable of being an equal disgrace.

John: Don't say that! Adam: No, it's ok to say that! I mean, really, sometimes they've been the best band I've ever seen in my life, but

they also... I mean, when we went up to Canada they were almost as bad as US

Javier: Uhhhill. Sam: I've NEVER seen a band as bad as we were that day. That was one of the worst sets I've ever seen. Javier: We're a neat little package

MRR: When you all played at Gilman Street, Sam said some stuff on stage

before playing about how "the medium is the message". But as soon as you started playing, no one could make out a single lyric Sam was

Adam: That's silly. That's not "the medium is the message", that's "The message is the message". Medium is the message "means not to be redundant - doing it yourself, putting out your own records, booking your own tour, being involved in all the workings of your own band. There are so many bands out there that have totally important messages that you can't understand the words to. Even FUGAZI... Javier: (wince)

Adam:... even FUGAZI, who I think have a whole lot to say, you know, when they're up there screaming it doesn't mean that they don't have a message. That's why you have lyric sheets.

Sam: The medium is ugly music. Music that most hardcore bands, and I'm using hardcore in quotes, don't want to play anymore

Adam: I don't think that there really are many hardcore bands anymore. John: Our music is there for anybody who

wants it, but it's presented on our own terms. MRR: There's a big show coming up in New York where several hardcore bands are playing with BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS. Would you play a bill like that if offered? Adam: I think we'd be full of shit if we said that

we wouldn't. I'd just want to make sure that if we were ever offered anything like that, that it was on our own terms, that the door price was low, things like that. Sam: Na, I think it

sounds ike bullshit. Sounds ike a concert, not a show.

John: As far as promoting your band, it's important to use the mainstream to your advantage.

Sam: Yeah, alright that's true. I have nothing against the concept of playing a show with a mainstream act like BDP, I would just want to make sure that it didn't turn into a staged, preplanned event where the bands were seperated from the audience. And that tends to be what happens when you involve larger acts like that. That's all, A lot of this just depends on the conduct of the bands, whether or not they let themselves get used like that

MRR: Future plans?

John: Tour until we can't tour any more.

Javier: We're gonna play the Grand Canyon. John: We want to play places called Tal's Dart Bar

Adam: I think we're gonna break up after the tour.

Javier: So our records can go up in value. MRR: Anything else? Javier: Eat lots of beef.

Sam: Eat beef, read Sports Illustrated, beat up flag burners, watch "Married with Children" because it's a really funny, intelligent show... Adam: And remember, vote! Because your vote counts.

photos: rich unhoch

ghettos. MRR: Getting back

a n d SICK OF IT ALL?

tape it for you.

in Iraa!

John: Who cares?

Sam: Well worded.

Adam: Let me just give my stock answer. My stock answer is, that when we went into that "debate", ha ha, we thought that there were not only ground rules for the discussion, but that there was a common undestanding of

that there was a common understanding of what we were discussing... what makes up hardcore, what matters to bands and what

matters to people. And we couldn't have

been more wrong than we were. And when it's not even understood between the two

T's not even understood between the two parties that're arguing that there's a common thing that they're both trying to claim... we were just on different planets. John: The mentality of "what makes you so much better" shouldn't even have to be adDressed in the first place.

Javier: If you want to hear what happened, send a tape to Steve Martin. He'll be glad to

Adam: Because they won. Sam: Yeah, they won, horay! Just like we won

MRR: Your music sounds pissed off. Are you

John: In our own suburban kind of way. No, uh,

in comparason with a lot of people we don't

Adam: That's a good point. That's one of the big reason I don't do drugs... because I don't have any excuse in my life to need an escape. But also, then you've also a band like RORSCHACH who are ten times more pissed

off sounding than BORN AGAINST and they're like twenty times more suburban than us. So l

don't really think that all that comes into play.

really have that much to complain about.

Adam: I believe the final score was 35-13.

yourselves really that pissed off?

I've met some really crazy people from suburbia and some really dull people from the