Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life magazine

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Michael W. Schull

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Jerome Kotecki

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract for *Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life* magazine:

*Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life* magazine is a project based around a perceived need for a publication encompassing the lives of underground musicians and their triumphs and struggles in the world of record labels and tours, progress and setbacks. The object of this project was to write and design a quarterly publication that both entertains and informs music lovers as well as musicians themselves. Submissions were made from contributors in the rock 'n' roll field, both musicians and journalists.
Rationale behind *Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life* magazine:

As a long-time music enthusiast and player in rock ‘n’ roll bands for nearly the past decade, when it came time to decide upon a thesis topic, I wanted to somehow involve my love of music. In my four years at Ball State University, I focused on honing my writing skills in the journalism program, choosing to pursue the option of magazine journalism. I spent time writing for both Ball State’s *Daily News* and *Expo* magazine; I also interned doing writing and design work for the Muncie Center for the Arts.

It was at Muncie Center for the Arts that I developed a newsletter for their various programs, and realized that perhaps it wouldn’t be as difficult as I believed to put together a good looking magazine. I had often considered doing a ‘zine related to the punk rock music for which I have an affinity, but abandoned the idea as I didn’t want to contribute another poor product to the world. As I gained confidence in my abilities both as a reporter and designer, my creative project took form.

The underground world of fanzines has been around since the days of garage bands in the 1960s. Such influential rock writers as Lester Bangs and Richard Meltzer put out their own music rags, building upon that foundation to launch successful careers in the business of music writing. It was my idea to contribute a similar magazine to the world, only to focus from the inside out instead of from the perspective of a fan. My idea for *Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life* was born to fill a void; I wanted to create a magazine that would represent the behind-the-scenes trials and tribulations an underground band or musician faces in the world, trying to get its music heard by a larger audience and to become a self-sufficient enterprise.
Taking the name as a tongue-in-cheek poke at those who have tried to dissuade me from my delusions of rock ‘n’ roll grandeur, I borrowed the title from that of a song by Supagroup, a New Orleans band I met while on the road. The idea to produce an initial 24-page, black and white photocopied magazine developed while documenting the progress of my band The Retreads’ summer tour of 2002.

Upon returning, I contacted Dr. Jerome Kotecki regarding advising my project. Dr. Kotecki has worked closely with my father, coordinator of Display Services at Ball State, on several presentations and visual documentaries he’s done for his work in the Physiology department. Because of the outstanding work I’d observed, I decided to choose Dr. Kotecki as an advisor knowing well that his experience could be a useful tool in putting together a great project.

Within the actual first magazine, I approached many people whom I am friends with to write columns. Each of those contacted had various experience in the field of independent music, whether it be playing in bands or writing on the subject. John Sewell, a 20-year veteran of independent bands and current freelance journalist, and Steven Harold Hayes, a local musician in rock group The Common and current in the musical Hedwig and the Angry Inch, both submitted written work for my project.

I also interviewed Mike of Denton, Texas band The Riverboat Gamblers. After knowing Mike for a couple of years and playing shows with his various bands, I wanted to sit and talk to the man, knowing well that his character would shine through and make for an entertaining read. Also, his band is one of my favorite groups and I consider it an honor to have it as part of my magazine.
I wrote features on mp3 technology and independent music and a tour journal/pictorial documenting my band’s summer tour. The mp3 article showcases my ability to research and write a thorough article with a wide variety of text and human sources. The tour journal provides insight into the daily life of musicians with no budget traveling thousands of miles across the country in tight quarters, the highs and lows and frazzled nerves and snags hit along the way.

I chose to run two advertisements in my magazine. Both serve as examples of the type of ads I might run by paid advertisers, though the examples are of companies that have helped my band or my friends in the past. I hope to include local businesses and other relevant ads in future issues.

It has been a pleasure to work with Dr. Kotecki and my associates, and I feel the final result of Rock 'n' Roll Tried to Ruin My Life is a great achievement as well as something I look forward to continuing in the future. Whether financially viable or not, I feel it is important to have another outlet than music and writing has been something I’ve enjoyed and excelled at in my time at Ball State. I hope that others can enjoy and appreciate the work I’ve put in to Rock 'n' Roll, and I look forward to meeting new people and the future collaborations this magazine is sure to bring.
Rock 'n Roll Tried To Ruin My Life!

A look inside the lives of working musicians

Inside:
The Riverboat Gamblers Rehearsal Tour Journal MP3s and Independent Music and More!
THIEVING BASTARDS
A MELODY OF RETREADS AND BROKEN QUILLS
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All photography done by Mike Schull  
Layout also done by Mike Schull
Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you Rock 'n' Roll Tried To Ruin My Life, a 'zine put together by yours truly. In trying to meet my graduation requirement from the fine institution Ball State University and its Honors College program, I needed to complete a thesis project. Shying away from research-based papers that would have kept me in the library for most of the semester, I instead chose this route.

I had considered putting together a 'zine for a number of years but shied away due to the perception I had of kids with 'zines. But having completed study in the journalism department in the area of magazines, I feel it is almost my duty to throw in my two cents and add another handful of paper to the pile. I have yet to see a magazine in the mainstream that tells it like it is from a musician and avid music listener's perspective. It is my hope that I can keep this going and involve as many people as I can that wish to be involved in such a project - a magazine for and about the average working musician struggling to tour and release records.

Big, sincere thanks to a few select individuals who have helped me accomplish putting together a respectable publication. Dr. Jerome Kotecki, my thesis advisor, should be recognized first and foremost for allowing me the reigns and giving guidance when necessary. Rock writer and bassist John Sewell and The Common's bassist Steve Hayes both stepped up to the plate and contributed great columns; I hope they will continue with me as this 'zine persists. Mike Wiebe of the Riverboat Gamblers also gave me a great interview that I think you'll all find to be a very entertaining read. Nate Snyder, a graphic artist from New York City who has helped my band immensely, threw together a cool advertisement for our new record. I had tried to line up more contributors and material, but due to schedules and general rock 'n' roll apathy, a few of these failed to materialize past the discussion stage. Again, in the future I hope to do more with this 'zine - including interviews, record reviews, more columns and even great features!

Anyway - read, enjoy and look forward to future issues of "Rock 'n' Roll," - I hope to publish four times a year, so get those submissions to the address found on the back!

Your slave to the grind,

-Mike

The Team:

Mike Schull - Editor In Chief and Executive Coordinator

Dr. Jerome Kotecki - Advisor

Contributors:

Steven Harold Hayes
John Sewell
Mike Wiebe

For advertising rates and information or comments regarding Rock'n'Roll Tried To Ruin My Life, please e-mail us at: rocknrollzine@theretreads.com
Local musician gets a taste of Eastern-Bloc Rock, theatre stage

I think I've always had a touch of the theater bug in me. I remember acting out skits in elementary school or my turn in school plays. I've always pictured my acceptance speech at the Oscars. Of course, along with being named Best Actor, I'm also a successful musician kind of like Sinatra was - or Cher.

That admitted, I've had great fun being part of an Indianapolis-based production of the glam rock musical Hedwig & The Angry Inch. For 28 shows I've donned wig, makeup, and costume and portrayed a fellow named Jacek, the bassist for "those ambassadors of Eastern-Bloc rock, The Angry Inch."

I only have one spoken line in the show, nonetheless I spend a good ninety minutes a night at center stage reacting to the main character's monologue about life as an infamous transsexual East German rock star. (It's a complicated show. I won't explain it much further than that.) The music part came pretty simple. I'm catching on to the acting. But the real learning has come from being part of a professional production with a professional support and technical staff.

Through the run, I've experienced numerous odd revelations and thoughts that could only have come by being in this production.

The strongest revelation is the sensation of being instantly appreciated and respected. It's an odd sensation walking out onto stage and seeing nearly 100 people who have paid around $20 a pop waiting to see the show you're about to put on. I'm much more accustomed to begging friends to see the band and have 3 show up out of sympathy. The response does create some pressure, but it's a good kind of pressure. The pressure to perform, to give the audience more than they expected. I hope to carry that feeling on to other shows.

Another revelation is a rethinking of the notion of what makes a show. We've always relied on material and antics to get people to pay attention. I'm realizing a little flash in your lights, clothing, and appearance goes a long way. I don't think I'll be painting on eyeliner to play the neighborhood bar, but I do need to sit down and figure out how to set me and the band apart from the garage band down the street.

A third odd sensation is the whole notion of being 'professional.' This gig is a paying one. I have the same status (though a much smaller salary) as the guys in the orchestra pits of every theater around the world. I have to say this is the most fun job I've ever done.

With it has come a certain respect from people who have seen and know about the show. It's odd being told "you're talented" by total strangers. I'm accustomed to drinking buddies offering a 'you rock' pat to the back, but not a legitimate appreciation of a job well done. It is fulfilling, and a bittersweet taste of a life I wouldn't mind living full time.

Despite the good times, I am looking much forward to moving on from this production. It's been everything I wanted and more. But I'm ready to apply the lessons learned from being part of this to The Common. I'm ready to stop playing the work of someone else and start building my own song catalog again. Oh, from time to time I may throw on some eye shadow for old time's sake, but I won't miss being a backing guy when I can be a star.
The Rock'n'Roll Disease

If there's one thing you can count on in your "career in rock," it's failure. Heck, even those who attain a modicum of success wind up being the drunk, diseased, angry, insanely babbling guys at the end of the local bar after their fifteen minutes are over. Sure, once in a blue moon the lucky few score huge hits and thereby find what is (at least to you) seemingly infinite success. But, rest assured, that won't happen to you.

Most rock musicians are like high school football heroes who don't have to quit the team after graduation. Rest assured, anyone who has experienced even a millisecond of ego trip that is rock'n'roll will keep on coming back for more. Rock musicians are like coke addicts and the notion of rock'n'roll fame is the ultimate commodity. Once you've had your first fix, you're hooked for life. From then on, you'll be willing to rob your mother, lie, cheat, steal, or play in umpteen god-awful bands in hopes of regaining that initial buzz.

Rock'n'roll is for the young; so how come so many rockers are still slogging it out on the club circuit, well into their middle age? Because rockers never grow up, never face reality, and are never willing to let that dream die. Rock culture always preaches the superiority of adolescence. And rockers always swallow this idiotic notion hook, line and sinker.

So why is it that even though there are thousands upon thousands of musicians who continuously bang their heads against the wall, rock'n'roll bands seldom last more than a few years? Well, who would expect small groups of immature (usually) males with bloated egos and limited intelligence to get along?

The rock band is a small, dimwitted protozoa that usually consists of three to five cells. The individual cells (i.e. band members) are all codependent, at least to a varying degree. In order for a rock band to survive the larval stages, a kind of group psychosis must be achieved: all of the members must be convinced of the band's infinite worth. Of course, it's relatively easy to promote this kind of groupthink -- at least for a while.

Rockers are usually made in high school, because conditions in the high school era create the perfect petri dish within which monstrous, pernicious strains of ego can be formed. Once these strains of ego are created, well, watch out.

Any high school kid that can bash out four chords with the slightest degree of competence is an instant star -- at least within the confines of his high school. Next thing you know, the instant high school rocker is given the keys to the city, so to speak: girls are interested, the kid thinks he's some kind of stud, his ego grows exponentially...

OK, so the seeds of delusion have been planted. And it's a nonstop tour through the realms of hell from here.

When a rocker proceeds to the post high school phase, the disease takes complete hold. Once a young rocker is freed from the confines of his suburban home (and rockers almost never come from impoverished families), he is freed to pursue his muse, which usually consists of bad drugs, cheap beer and loose sex. The late teens and early twenties is invariably a period of per-
sonal regression for any young rocker. And this regression results in the burgeoning bard becoming pig enough to write lyrics that mirror the narcissism, excess and stupidity that is requisite for the "rock'n'roll lifestyle."

Chances are, the rock disease will spread to this stage and, after a few wasted years of absolutely no success on a local level, the patient will seek help. Rock infection is usually cured by the crushing weight of time.

However, those lucky few who bust into the indie rock level are in for a more insidious period of illness that can prove to be fatal. Indie rockers live like dogs, subsist on ridiculously poor diets, neglect their health in every way possible, and are quite likely to carry a multitude of sexually transmitted diseases. And these hazards to physical health are nothing compared to the intense, irreversible psychological damage that ensues.

All it takes to get a fatal rock'n'roll infection is to convince a handful of hipsters that your music is somehow valid. Any rocker that has a few asskissers and sycophants following him around for even a week will be permanently convinced of his genius status.

Of course, generating a small blip on the indie screen rarely carries over into mainstream success. Instead, rock'n'rollers are left - after years of regression, malnutrition and debauchery - convinced that the entertainment industry just wasn't ready for their talent. By this point, the rock delusion has run its full course. All that's left for these damned souls is a pizza delivery job and the dreaded seat at the end of the local bar; invariably the same bar where the rocker played his first gig "back in the day," when he was still a teenager.

There is an infinitely small portion of rockers that actually do make it big. These lost souls are doomed to an even more wretched fate: they become "legends" like Jon Bon Jovi, Bono, Mick and even the bloated caricature that is Johnny Rotten. Living legend status is a fate crueler than that of a rock martyr. Heck, dead rockers usually maintain their cool.

And the ones lucky enough to die aren't drunkenly stumbling around twenty years later, singing "We Are The World" and doing Pepsi commercials.

If you have experienced even one of the symptoms of the rock disease mentioned in this treatise, seek help immediately. Sell your guitar and amp, go back to school, find the lord, join Alcoholics Anonymous: do something. If you've ever said, "I was born to rock," it could already be too late.
Making a fanzine has never been a priority or even an intention of mine. I generally avoid reading the high-contrast, poorly photocopied and stapled rags that some of my friends in high school would make, putting words on paper they thought were deep or world-changing. And maybe some of them were, but to me it always seemed like passive action without much purpose other than to give readers a portal into your life to watch, like a train wreck, how literally boring and pathetic and whiny one can be.

So now, as a journalism student preparing to graduate with a degree in the area of magazine journalism, I have chosen to put together a magazine of my own detailing the lives of working, independent musicians and what they face. I've asked some friends to contribute, I've written some articles and I suppose I want to document the "skills" I've acquired in my four-plus years of study at Ball State University.

But let's face, what I'm really doing is contributing my own high-contrast waste to throw on top of the pile of all those disposable pieces of teenage prose that I railed against who knows how many times.

Here's my twisted motive: nothing in my life has given me as much release, frustration, memories or pride as the band I've been in for the last seven years of my life and all the accomplishments we've put under our belts. We've had quite a few high points and I feel we've written some great and meaningful tunes, and beyond that I've made many of my closest friends from this experience. And for some dumb reason, I felt like documenting my experience and the experiences of others.

As you've noticed from the tour journal also contained in this edition of my 'zine, I spent a good chunk of my summer cooped up in a van my three bandmates. For that month, my schedule consisted mostly of eating, sleeping and rocking - a good diet for some, including myself. After that month of shows and a couple more upon returning home, we all parted ways for the semester; Scottie went so far as
deserting the country for the more temperate climate of Australia.

Without really noticing it, I hit a rut. Hard. I slowly tapered off my social life and directed it toward just going to classes and going to work at my new job at Donatos Pizza. I became numb to the way I was feeling, which was a perpetual state of dread. And I wasn't sure of what, nor did I really care. I ignored the feelings and have spent too much time watching TV, surfing the Internet and drinking beer. I blamed my problems on the fact that graduation was approaching and I've always had a total loathing of drastic change.

A few months have passed and today as I delivered pizzas, moping around in my constant state of mental lethargy that I've found myself in, I put in the record we made last spring. You'll read about it in here too, but that's not the point. I listened to the music for the first time without really feeling involved. I just felt like a listener - it's been a few months since I'd heard those songs let alone played them.

And you know what? It sounded good. In fact, I totally rocked out to the songs and sang along, feeling like I was hearing my favorite band instead of myself. I realized how much the whole thing means to me and that I feel lost without it. I've found myself joking about it some lately, such as telling a friend that without the band I feel like a nobody - if I'm not "Mike Retread" then I don't know who I am. Only after thinking back on it did I realize how sad that statement actually was.

I know I'm a good person with a good heart and a competent mind. But I've become entwined with rock 'n' roll, so much so that I've let it define me. And despite the pitiful rant that this may seem to be, in the words of Alice Cooper, "I like it, love it, like it, love it."

I may never be famous and my band may never be a household name, but I think so long as I can plug in my guitar, crank up my amp and get on stage in front of people and go berserk, I'll always know one way to be happy. And perhaps in putting together a magazine about that love I can help those with a similar love to get their work across to a larger audience, or at least to an audience who might not have otherwise read their words or heard their tunes. That's important, right?
The Riverboat Gamblers

by Mike Schull

The Riverboat Gamblers are a five-piece, hard-rockin' combo hailing from the cultural mecca known as Denton, Texas. Within the Gamblers, Mike sings, Colin and Fadi play guitars, Pat holds down the low end on bass and Jesse pounds the drums. Five finer individuals I have not met: the boys are both exemplary hosts and house guests. Taking cues from bands like the Ramones and AC/DC, the Gamblers bring the rock 'n' roll each time they play, exploding in a combination of sweat, booze and energy, enough to make even the most jaded rock fan stand up and say "amem!". I recently had the opportunity to kick back and discuss life, love and the ways of the rock with Gamblers front man Mike Wiebe, an entertainer on and off stage as you will see.

Rock 'n' Roll Tried To Ruin My Life: What is the history of the Gamblers? I know you guys have had some member turnover in the few years you've been around and haven't had so much recorded output. What's the story and is this now everyone's main project?

Mike: The Gamblers started about 4 years ago. When we started we were just playing house shows, but at the time Denton had this huge house show scene and tons of people were coming out. We were having such a good time. We were having such a good time and dealing with club people was and is, really unsavory. I guess we just never thought anyone else would really want to hear us other than our friends, but then we started creeping out of town a bit and touring bands would tell us that we needed to get on the road.

We've recorded two albums but the first one sounded so shitty we never tried to get it put out...some of the songs ended up on the second album that Tim Kerr did. That first album set us back financially which also set us back time wise. But yes, now this is our main project. This is hopefully what we are gonna make full time.

What, outside of other bands, has influenced your songwriting? Do literature or movies or pop culture play any part in the lyrics you write?

A lot of the early stuff was strictly to piss off the emo kids - make it as insensitive and obnoxious as possible. But since then a lot of the writing has become about specific situations - problems surrounding the band as a whole or specific members.

I've always liked how rap guys have a whole song about how great they are. I don't know when we will do the same, sing about how we are not to be messed with. We will never, however, do any kind of rapping. I hate rap-metal but there are some hip-hop groups that I love. Just because you like something doesn't mean you should attempt it.

Has your theater major in college played any part in your stage show or added a dramatic aspect to the Gamblers?

I don't think so. I kinda dropped out of that school because I didn't like all the cheesy aspects of it. I think that wanting to perform live in a band and acting are kinda similar. They are both part of a weird psychosis that makes you want to
stand up in front of a bunch of people and make an ass of yourself. It's probably some sort of juvenile need for approval from others because I wasn't breast fed...but that need is different than writing music which is kinda solitary.

I still act though...I just finished a film called "Prison A-Go-Go," it should be out next year.

Why the name Riverboat Gamblers? When I was in Denton, I didn't see no damn riverboats with outlaws gamblin' on 'em. Does the name have anything to do with pick-pockets and loose women?

Man, when you're a riverboat gambler you're just a poor sap trying to make a living on a big, nice boat. You step on that boat and you could leave it in another town a rich man or a poor man...it's all in the cards. And that's life.

You seem pretty mild-mannered in person when you aren't on the stage. What changes? How do you go from Clark Kent to Superman?

Simple...I take off my glasses...

No, I just wanna have a good show. I can't afford to go to a therapist anymore so Gamblers shows are kind of like free therapy. If I feel bummed out I try and take it out on stage. I just want everyone to have a good time.

Do any other bands get jealous of the Gamblers? I mean, you've gotta blow some touring bands off the stage that don't know what they're up against coming into the show...

All bands are jealous!

No, I don't know. I see it like apples and oranges, they are both tasty and good for you, but I don't have a favorite. Some days I like oranges, some days I like apples. Some days I only wanna listen to Rocket from the Crypt, some days I only wanna listen to Johnny Cash. I don't think that one is better than the other. (cont'd next page)
they're just different bands doing different things at the top of their game.

We are, however, much better than New Found Glory.

What's the deal with the new screenprinting operation? And why didn't you name it the Sweatshop? Are you employing any illegal aliens or keeping all the cash for yourself?

Hopefully the screenprinting will turn into a thing that I can be in a band full time and have a business when the band isn't doing anything. I would love to get to the point that we hire illegals (ed. Note - they ARE from Texas, after all), that's the American dream. Originally it was called Skeleton printing, but we figured it might scare off the squares. And when it comes to making t-shirts, I'm down with taking squares' money.

Whenever bands are interviewed, they inevitably say it's "all about the music" as to why they do what they do. But we all know it's about the the girls and the parties and the bigger than life qualities of rock'n'roll. You put this band together while you were doing other bands, so was this the attempt to grab the golden ring or is this an actual "artistic endeavor"?

We put the band together way before all this "garage rock" started catching on. We wanted to do something that was different than everything going on where we were at the time - like pop punk, which I like, and emo, which I hate.

I can't believe what's going on in music now though. I can't believe that the Hives and White Stripes are as big as they are; the Strokes I can buy because they have rich daddies. But the Hives and White Stripes make you kind of say, "what if..." I think to have half as much success as those bands you'd be doing pretty good.

But we have seen what happened with grunge and Seattle and then punk after the success of Green Day, so I know how this movie is gonna end.

We want to be as successful as possible but I don't want to suck anyone's dick to get on TRL or anything.

I've heard some rumors of new releases on some pretty sizable independent rock'n'roll and garage-specific labels. Give me a scoop, man, give me the goods. Inquiring minds want to know, considering I think you guys could be the biggest band in rock'n'roll I need to know who's got my back on that one.

Well, hopefully - and it looks like it is gonna happen - the next full length is gonna be on Gearhead Records...they seem excited and we're excited so hopefully it will be mutually beneficial. We are having to fight to get this record out on their label with our current label who...let's just say have some difficulties. But we are also doing a single on Estrus which is a really big deal to us as well. We have been listening to Estrus releases for years and are excited to be a part of that.

Any final words on what we should be checking out or what else you guys will be up to? Promote it or lose it, dude...

We are gonna tour in February and hopefully a whole bunch more next year, 2003. We'll hopefully do a split 7" with the Refracts... world domination!

[We're gonna] take over... make out with Avril Lavigne. Learn kung fu, tour Japan and become spokesmen for Toshiba laptops, lose 19 pounds, write a hit t.v. show about a wacky valet addicted to inserting a bicycle pump into is rectum and pumping...

For more information on The Riverboat Gamblers and Mike's other projects, check out these sites:

http://www.theriverboatgamblers.com
http://www.squeakycleanprinting.com
http://www.geocities.com/thechopsakis
"We've Arrived" Retreads tour gets local band out of Muncie, on road winning hearts and minds

Friday, July 19 - Bloomington, IN @ Second Story w/The Slurs
We packed and said our goodbyes but that wasn't enough. Holding us up was the fact that we were trying to install a CD player in the van that Scottie bought off a local tattoo artist. We finally gave up, duct taped the thing in the dash and took off for Bloomington with no tunes, not even the radio. We arrived fashionably late, like 11:30 pm. We loaded in and were up after the local band finished. We played a sluggish set, our curse that follows us every time we play Bloomington. The Slurs fared a little better, but still played an unenergized set to a lethargic crowd. We then piled into Sam and Jake's small apartment and Scottie had his own adventure with a lovely local lass. He returned to our group the next morning and we ate breakfast.

Saturday, July 20 - St. Louis, MO @ Hi-Pointe w/The Slurs
After surviving an amazingly hot van ride, we found the Hi Pointe and loaded our gear in, then went and checked out the "campus village" area. Not too much going on. The Slurs played first, a really good set. We played after, not amazing but better than the night before. Another band played after us, and then as the last band played a speaker cabinet blew up and caught fire. General confusion enveloped the bar crowd and everyone was forced out, as many local fire trucks showed up. We burned the place down! Following the show we tried to find a "cheap" hotel, eventually settling on a Day's Inn in the middle of Missouri somewhere. Everything else was way expensive, but the nice lady there set us up in a room previously occupied only hours earlier by the Doobie Brothers. We caught a few hours of sleep and cleaned up, then headed out again.

Sunday, July 21 - Kansas City, KS @ The Brick
Since we had a short drive, we stopped in Warrensburg, home of our friends Kosher. We couldn't find any of the guys, but we met a cool local that owned a new club in the town. On the way out, we ran into Rob from Kosher at the local Wal Mart. I bought deodorant. Rob came with us to KC for the show. At the venue, Hannah, the girl who booked us, cooked us some delicious food, including my Portobello mushroom sandwich. It was amazing, the best food of tour. The barkeep was also nice and turned out to know my friend John who was then playing in Duvall. We played a kick-ass set and ended the night with a cover of the Gizmos "Mean Screen." We then packed up and headed back to Rob's house.

Monday, July 22 - Iowa City, IA @ Gabe's Oasis w/Schatzi
Gabe's was one of the bigger venues we played on tour. Opening for Schatzi, sort of an indie-pop band, was probably not for the best in terms of getting a crowd that wanted the Retreads, but it made for interesting partying after the show. The guys in the band were into what we were doing and were very cool, especially Monte and Mark. We stayed with a cute Asian girl named Mindy. She had a nice apartment but it was sort of far away from Iowa City. I couldn't find my way back there now if my life depended on it, but it was fine for that night.
Tuesday, July 23 - Warrensburg, MO @ The Setlist w/Backstab Disaster, Modern Machines

We had set up a last-minute show while stopping in Warrensburg to fill a day off. Backstab Disaster was Rob and Josh's project, both of whom were in Kosher. Tony sang in the group and turned out to be a very cool guy. Modern Machines started the night and were pretty good - they were on tour from Milwaukee and featured an old friend, Nate Disgusting. Actually, Nate talks more than any human being should. Backstab was fun, albeit slightly poppy punk music that the locals seemed to enjoy. We took the stage and played an overpowering rock set that ended in "punk rock karaoke," a rare occasion that usually only happens when we play basements. We stayed at Brandon's house (the guy who books the club), Trent from Kosher came over and hung out. He had been at the show too, and it was cool to catch up with him.

Wednesday, July 24 - day off

Before leaving the KC area, we stopped at Josh's house. He managed to get us some free pizza from the Papa John's he worked at. Before we left, his friend who worked at a sub shop called and brought us subs as well. We gave her a CD and were quite appreciative. We had hoped to find someplace to play when we got to Ames, Iowa, but things didn't work out. We did, however, find a cheap motel and a bar that had $5 all-you-can-drink well drinks. Needless to say, all had too good a time, especially when the bar's DJ started spinning 80's metal. Carl and I had a sing-along.

Thursday, July 25 - Minneapolis, MN @ House of Knives w/The Goochers

We finally met up with our t-shirts at the Minneapolis UPS hub. We then found the venue, which turned out to be the basement of a house. The Goochers were really cool and happened to be friends of the Beauty's, friends of ours from Indiana. "Sneaky" Pete from openers Falcon Crest put us up for the night and hijinx ensued at his residence. The show was OK but not spectacular, but the fact that one of the guys from Falcon Crest worked at a beer distributor and gave us all sorts of free beer was pretty cool. We ended up with a lot of Aas beer from Norway. Turbonegro might have smiled.

Friday, July 26 — Milwaukee, WI @ Punk Mahal w/Motorcycle Prom Dates, Death And Taxes

Following the long, boring drive to Milwaukee, we were again without a show. However, since we had directions to a place having a show, we figured we'd show up and see if we could play. Thanks to the guys in Motorcycle Prom Dates, we got to open the basement show and actually even got some money. We kicked some ass and made some friends and fans, and then the other bands did as well. I met Richard Adventure for the first time, and he is truly a unique individual. His band, Death and Taxes, also featured an old friend who is also in the Shut-Ups, Lugs. Needless to say, D & T rocked and rocked hard, and enjoy smoking what they call "hawkwind."

Saturday, July 27 - Green Bay, WI @ Main Stage w/The Slurs

We had a short drive up to Green Bay to play a local "townie" bar full of what can only be described as mutants. A very tiny crowd in Rug Rats slippers kept trying to dance with people. She ditched before the Slurs' set. We played pretty decently, enough to make friend Todd Kellner approve. The Slurs didn't go over well at all, unfortunately. Green Bay is a weird town.

The Leghounds closed the night and were so incredibly tight it was unbelievable.

Sunday, July 28 -

Chicago, IL @ Beat Kitchen w/The Slurs

During the drive back to Chicago with the Slurs, we stopped by Lake Michigan and headed for the beach. Mayhem erupted as Retreats and Slurs entered the lake. I stood and watched in horror as paste white Hoosiers looked like fools. We then headed to my friend John's house. After picking him up, we headed to the city and located the venue. The Beat Kitchen was a bar in two segments - the actual bar and then the venue. Patrons only had to pay to get in the venue, so the crowd for the music was very sparse. We played to a few friends and the Slurs played to a small crowd too. At the end of the night, no one got paid and they told us we should be thankful we didn't have to pay for our food. We wanted to kick the staff in the collective balls. Screw that place, neither of our bands will be playing there again anytime soon.

Monday, July 29 - Ypsilanti, MI @ Elbow Room w/Rwake

A weird, sort of metal bar in Ypsilanti awaited us after our full day of driving from Chicago where we'd stayed with my friend John. A band called Rwake was also playing, a complicated metal band that was part sludge, part manic hardcore. They were all awesome people; it turns out their drummer booked our show in Arkansas, where they are from. We stayed with the soundman and I apparently snored so loud I chased Scottie from the dining room, where I slept on the hard wood floor.
Tuesday, July 30 - Detroit, MI @ Alvin's
Following a day of doing nothing more than screwing around in the close by Ann Arbor and then napping in a park, we got to Alvin's. We were told that we were late and they thought we weren't going to show. We shrugged and said we forgot about the time change. They didn't believe us.
Neither did we. We headlined to a bar full of maybe 20 people that could probably have held 500. The booking guy thought we were good though, so we hope to go back and open a bigger show sometime. The people were all friendly, but downtown Detroit is a scary, scary place. We were all relieved to get back in the van and head home for a couple days off. I, unfortunately, had to spend my time moving into a new house. I also had to do the drive from Detroit to Muncie in the middle of the night, which wasn't much fun either.

Thursday, August 1 - Dayton, OH @ Jag's w/The Give-Ups
After a couple days of working my butt off moving between houses, we hopped back in the van to head off to Dayton to start leg two of tour. After getting thoroughly lost because I forgot to bring the directions, we found Jag's, a former gay strip club. Well, the place was remodeled but they haven't hired completely new people yet. Interesting place. We played a solid set then headed off with the Give-Ups. We raided Steve's parent's kitchen and then headed off to Greenville to help one of their longtime friends, David, "break the edge." His house was completely with sauna and pool and we took full advantage. I slept in a comfortable bed that night, too. Every night should be so nice.

Friday, August 2 - Cincinnati, OH @ the Void w/The Give-Ups
We headed down early to visit Jon's girlfriend's friend Alexis. She and her mom had a cookout for us, which was awesome. We then headed to the Void, which is a large, un-air conditioned punk club that wasn't so great. We played first, an uninspired set and made our way off stage. The Give-Ups played last after some Revelation Records band that pretty much sucked.

Saturday, August 3 - Morristown, TN @ Smokehouse Café w/Hifidriveby
We headed to Morristown not knowing what to expect. Robbie, a friend of ours who used to play in the band KidSnack, had hooked us up with a band called Hifidriveby that released records on the label he runs. Morristown was the band's hometown and we were a show, so we agreed to play. We got to the place and find a barbecue joint; good enough. They moved tables around so we could set up. We played a decent set to a few families, one of which bought a bunch of our merchandise for their kids. Again...OK.

We ended up staying with Scottie's friend Kevin, who we went to Earlham with. He and his friend Josh had an enormous video room that was much like a movie theater. And this dude came over who had a miniature pincher dog that marched like Hitler. Knoxville is a weird place.

Sunday, August 4 - Knoxville, TN @ Old City Java
Despite the fact that Robbie told us he couldn't get us a show in Knoxville, we showed up at a coffee house that was having a show and quickly got added to the bill. It just shows what can happen when you try to make things happen. Not a great show and not too many people watched us play, but it was certainly better than nothing and we made a few friends and got a place to stay out it.

Monday, August 5 - Nashville, TN @ Indicenet w/Hifidriveby
We got to Nashville pretty early and there wasn't much to do around where we were. We found a Taco Bell and ate some food and then basically just hung around the venue waiting for someone to open the place up. Finally it was opened and we loaded in, along with another band from New York called the Technicalities. These guys proved to be comrades by introducing us to our new free breakfast scam. Hifidriveby played this show too, and it was cool to get a chance to hang out with them again. They are a good pop band worth anyone's while.
Unfortunately, we had to leave right after the show - we had to gear up for an all-night drive to Austin.
That's...really...far.

Tuesday, August 6 - Austin, TX @ Emo's w/Catheters and Riverboat Gamblers
After driving all-night and stopping in Hope, Arkansas for a free breakfast, we made it to Dallas around noon. We got back on the road, and after about a half hour or so I was driving and the right rear tire blew out, scaring me half to death and making us fear for our lives very briefly. Though we had a donut, it was the wrong size. After an hour of waiting for AAA, a tow truck showed up and towed us to the closest town. Wal Mart didn't have the tire, so we had to be driven to another tire store and we bought one there and brought it back and put it on. It was all a major hassle. By late afternoon, we were on the road again. We hit Austin in the early evening, ready to rock with our old friends the Riverboat Gamblers and the Catheters. Also on the bill were Custom Made Scare and some band that dropped off. We played first and not so many people were there, but it was cool just to play Emo's. Custom Made Scare's manager was named Johnny Pockets, and he told us to "remember that name." He was such a creepy character none of us will ever forget it.
The Catheters played an excellent set only to be upstaged by the Gamblers who blew me away. And to think, two minutes prior to the set their frontman Mike was outside puffing up blue liquid. We crashed at Mike's girlfriend's apartment. I slept in the van and got a mosquito bite on my foot. I woke up hating everyone. We hung out with our old friend Brian Rahn the next afternoon and ate spaghetti and watched Michael Moore videos. Then we left.

**Wednesday, August 7 - Dallas, TX @ Gypsy Tea Room w/Catheters and Riverboat Gamblers**

After the three-hour trek back to Dallas, we showed up at a posh rock club that we were apparently playing. The Catheters were there, and I swear I caught their guitarist Derek with his pants around his ankles, sitting in a urinal to pee. He denies it though. We played first (again) to a small crowd. The sound was really good and we played a solid set. The Catheters again played a great set as did the Gamblers. I'm pretty sure Mike dedicated a song to me, but in the craziness of everything I may be mistaken. It was a shame that was our last show with the Catheters on tour. After the show, we headed back to Denton to stay at various Gamblers' residences. We met the "Show Chicken," a man of legend within the Riverboat Gamblers entourage.

**Thursday, August 8 - New Orleans, LA @ El Matador w/The Scripts**

Following a quick night of sleep, we were off to check in on the Big Easy. We were going to meet and stay with a friend of mine named Bill who I'd met through an Internet message board and exchange tunes with for a few years. I'd yet to get down to NOLA though, so I'd never met the guy. We got to the bar early and went ahead and checked out the area on foot. Jon and I had a muffaletta sandwich that was seriously great. By the time we got back, Bill had shown up so we hung out with him. The Scripts opened and played dirty, Southern-influenced rock with a stoner vibe. They were loud and appreciably very nice. Benji from rockers Supagroup was running sound for the night, and it was very cool to meet him. We played a killer set and ended up playing some "punk rock jukebox" at the end of the set. A couple Jewish girls asked us if we were Nazis, also. After returning to Bill's, we caught a cab over to the Saint, which is a bar the guys in Supagroup own. Bill was so intoxicated that because he couldn't remember the address, he brought the whole phone book with him to "find it in the cab." The Saint was awesome; the bartender even plays in the band Syrup. So we got some free drinks and it was pretty excellent.

**Friday, August 9 - day off**

We decided to take a day off in New Orleans since Mike from the Gamblers hadn't found a show for us to play in Texas for Friday. I basically used the day to relax. The other guys went out and had an adventure, hitting strip clubs and knocking over trashcans and shattering bottles, etc. I needed some time off, so I stayed at Bill's place and watched some TV. They came back quite drunk and full of energy, so we made some sort of chili spaghetti concoction and eventually drifted off to sleep.

**Saturday, August 10 - day off**

On Saturday, we were assured that we'd be guest listed to the Hot Snakes show going on in Denton. We made the eight-hour trek back to the Rubber Gloves club. We watched Beehive and the Barracudas and the Hot Snakes, who featured John Reis from Rocket from the Crypt, but neither band impressed us much.

**Sunday, August 11 - Houston, TX @ Mary Jane's**

Despite the fact the Gamblers had to drop off the bill, we still played in Houston. This show was notable because it was the only club that had our name on the marquee. Not too many people showed, but we made friends with the bartender, which is always in your best interests as a band. We secured a cow skull from above a door after our set when we were sure no one was looking. We stayed at the promoter's place, a large space in a warehouse that was an artist colony. Much like ants, really. There was a pinball machine and the boys played with that quite a bit. On the ride back to the place, Jon became his alter ego, Captain Asshole, and nearly forced us to kill him.

**Monday, August 12 - day off**

After getting back to Denton, we pretty much just kicked back. We didn't do much of anything, honestly. We probably talked about Taco Cabana, the best Mexican fast food restaurant ever that happens to have a location in Denton, a lot.

**Tuesday, August 13 - Ft. Worth, @ Mad Ivan's TX w/Jackson 8, Eight Bucks Experiment**

We did some laundry and then headed to Ft. Worth, which was in close proximity to Denton. The show was held at a paint ball place, weird to say the least. Another band on the bill, Eight Bucks Experiment, happened to be in the move SLC Punk. I wasn't too impressed with any of the goings on, it was hot and we didn't play the greatest set. Then we headed back to Denton, which was starting to feel suspiciously like home.
Wednesday, August 14 - Denton, TX
@ Rubber Gloves w/Riverboat Gamblers

Perhaps the best show of tour, we finally got to play with the Riverboat Gamblers on their home turf. The club was fairly packed, we played a really tight set and then made way for one of my favorite rock 'n' roll bands.

They also played a killer set to their appreciative fans. After the show, there was a party at Colin's house but it dissipated rather quickly. Scottie and I stole away in the back of a pick up truck to get free Denny's with Rob from Dead Sexy and a couple of his friends. That ruled. We returned in the wee hours and nearly everyone was gone, so we set up camp for the night and went to sleep.

Thursday, August 15 - Oklahoma City, OK @ Green Door w/Riverboat Gamblers

Living on Gambler time has its advantages and disadvantages. Today we got a late start because Fadi ran out of gas in the van (after they were already running an hour late to leave). We headed to OKC before the Gamblers just to make sure one of the bands got on the road. The Green Door turned out to be a really cool club. We played a loud and rocking set to quite a few enthusiasts, and then the crowd eventually went nuts when the Gamblers played.

The only real problem was that the bartender decided to cut me off after I'd only had two beers! Scottie rectified the situation, but I felt like kicking that guy in the nuts anyway. We stayed with Mike's friend who happened to be a herpetologist, and he showed us some lizards and snakes he kept around his house.

Friday, August 16 - Little Rock, AR @ Downtown Music w/Black Cat Music

After saying goodbye and getting some directions off the computer at the local library, we headed to Arkansas. Little Rock was filled didn't resemble people in the movie Deliverance, though I was pretty convinced coming in that they would. We played a record store stuffed by metal heads. It was excellent in that they bought us pizza even though no one showed up for the show. Lookout Records band Black Cat Music got huffy about the situation and left, thinking themselves too good to play to no one. I'm not sure if they were or not, since they didn't play. We ate their pizza, too. After finding a cheap hotel, we all piled in and enjoyed some horror movies on HBO.

Saturday, August 17 - Louisville, KY @ Rudyard Kipling w/The Glasspack, Monkey Boy

The last night of tour found us in Louisville. After a long drive and refreshing free lunch at Cracker Barrel, we got to the venue. It was a fairly upscale place considering the types of bands it was hosting. Our friend Andy and his fiancée and some of her friends made it to the show. We played a very tight, energetic set considering we all just wanted to go home. And after the show, home we went, all tired of each other and ready to call it a tour.

Things were ultimately a success and at the time we were ready for it to be over, but in retrospect, I can't wait to head out on tour again.
### Article by Mike Schull

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Web of Confusion

How has the availability of free music on the Internet affected independent record labels and bands?

Five years ago there was no controversy.

Five years ago the average music consumer could not have predicted how easy it would be to score free digital music from the Internet. But it's no longer five years ago and the mp3 has become both a new means to distribute music and a menace to record labels and bands, allowing the easy pirating and dissemination of complete albums.

Today, nearly everyone is aware of the Mpeg layer 3 file, commonly abbreviated 'mp3.' This technology allows a user to have a CD-quality song in the form of a small file that takes up little space on the computer's hard drive, or that can be converted and burned on to blank CD-R discs. With the advent of online trading networks such as Napster and Audiogalaxy, a whole culture was born of music traders swapping files quickly and efficiently online, causing major record labels to sweat that this new technology was going to make them lose copious amounts of cash.

In the few years since that time, Napster finally succumbed after huge legal battles with very few victories and the mp3 has become perhaps the most controversial part of the music industry, with programs like Soul Seek popping up to take Napster's place. Major labels curse the medium for its ability to take the power from its hands and place it into those of the consumer. Music aficionados praise the format for allowing the discovery
of new music without the pitfalls of buying an album without hearing the music first. Consumer studies regarding the effect of mp3s on sales losses tend to be inconclusive at best, showing mixed results that support both sides of the battle. With each new research report and as more data is gathered, the controversy becomes more confusing. Because of the outspoken stance of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and heavy metal stalwarts Metallica, practically everyone in America who watches television or reads the papers knows how evil the major corporations find mp3 technology to be. But seemingly no one has paid any attention to the underground music community that thrives on any publicity it receives.

Searching for a voice and finding their fans instead

In my frustrated and confused early teenage years, I stumbled upon a form of music that changed my life. The fury of the guitars, the angry vocals, the lightning speed and precision of the drumming - punk rock music struck a nerve and reprogrammed everything I had previously thought music could be. I had found a place where I felt understood; the music became an outlet that I have never since abandoned.

Has the digitized music pirated all over the Internet really killed record sales of the independent labels and bands I love? Or has it helped give exposure to bands and broaden their fan bases?

"One of our labels told us that mp3s have been killing their sales, making it harder for them to afford to put out the bands they like," says Darren Hooper, bassist for Lookout! Records band Gaza Strippers. "Some people say record sales have gone up since the mp3. On the same note, two major independent distributors went bankrupt. Is that because of mp3s or the bad economy? Who knows?"

"Well, regarding Napster, I think once you get used to getting something for free, you'll be reluctant to pay for it."

-Andy Shernoff, The Dictators

So it makes sense that the dissemination of the music in the digital realm of the online world is a double-edged sword for punk bands. The Internet allows bands an efficient means to be heard on a global level without the pains and failures touring often involves, but the mp3 could potentially cause monetary losses for these same bands. Sites like MP3.com and GarageBand.com can offer quick exposure to bands wishing to be heard online.

Trent White, guitarist and founding member of the Warrensburg, Missouri band Kosher, has experience on both sides of the fence. Kosher, a recent signing of veteran punk label BYO Records, has spent many years self-releasing CDs Legion halls, basements - anywhere a few kids can come to have a good time and hear some rock 'n' roll.
and supporting those records with self-booked tours. Trent sees the band's recent acquisition by the label as a pay-off for years of hard work and self-promoting, which included sharing the bands songs on MP3.com and Napster.

"[MP3s] helped broaden our audience in a number of ways. When [our latest album] 'Self Control' was in its first release, we would log on to the Napster community and tell people about the band and urge them to download from us," says Trent. "Our popularity is still contained in a relatively small network, and our music isn't as saturated in the marketplace as other bands, so I don't believe that the spreading of our music in electronic form is going to hurt us, at least until our popularity increases."

The band recently enjoyed its first tour of the West Coast in support of the new record. It was the first time the band had help with booking a tour, thanks to Los Angeles' BYO and their many connections in the punk community. However, just because the label released the new record hasn't translated to instant success and major record sales. Trent says Kosher continues to promote the record using mp3s on its web site.

"We haven't seen any sales figures, but we would like to think that someone has purchased the album after hearing songs online," Trent told me. "If only one person bought the album after hearing it from a download, then it was worth it. In our position, anyone who listens to our music is helping us. If they have the same mentality we do, after hearing it online they will then purchase the album if they enjoyed it."

Closer to my own backyard, a local Muncie, Indiana emo-punk band called Face-Off is trying to get off the ground and gain a following. The band has implemented mp3s as a major approach to selling themselves and has thus far enjoyed positive results. Guitarist/songwriter Brent Adams says that because they are college students, it has been difficult to amass a following because time constraints and busy schedules don't allow them to play live very often.

"I get about an e-mail a day from someone who has found our music online," Brent says. "About 90 percent of them are kids who are from different states, some even different countries. Before we had our music online, we would maybe get one or two CD orders a month, and those sales came from friends or people who had seen us in concert. Since we've submitted our songs online, sales have increased tremendously for our CDs and I think it is because they are able to preview the CD and know what they are getting before they order it."

Others are more doubtful as to the positive effects electronic media on the Internet has on bands. John Sewell, a Chicago freelance journalist and former bassist for the Double Zero Records band Duvall, says there is no substitute for hard work and touring. The band is enjoying media attention because it features former members of the Capitol Records band the Smoking Popes, a now defunct major label act that enjoys an underground cult following.

"I think online stuff can work for bands that already have something of a buzz," John told me, speaking from the perspective of a musician who has been in and out of bands since the mid 1980s. "But the best way to promote a band is by playing live shows in front of actual crowds."

John, like many of the musicians and labels I talked to, believes that music consumers still want a finished product they can hold in their hands instead of just having computer files or a burned copy of a CD. "At this point in our 'career,' we're still underground and the kids all like to have their nice little CD cases with pictures of handsome rockers on them. You know how it is - the CD case is a fetish item and everybody wants stacks of them."

Maybe so, but independent record labels still fear losses in sales due to the rapid advances in technology encompassed by mp3s and CD burners.
I Don't Intend to Leave Empty-Handed

Though some of the most outspoken opponents of mp3s have been bands, it is a generally accepted fact that the ones who stand to lose the most money are the record labels having their products pirated. No label wants to see an album it released up on the Internet for free public consumption before it has even recouped the money sunk into the actual release.

However, mp3s are often one of the most effective methods used to promote a release. If the label releases a song or two to the public via the Internet, interested parties can sample an album before they choose to purchase it. This helps sales for customers who don't want to risk spending hard-earned cash on a band they haven't heard before, but it can also motivate the listener to seek out a free copy elsewhere.

Tim Chandler started Mutant Pop Records in April of 1995, dedicating himself to documenting the best of underground pop-punk music. His label initially focused on releasing 7" vinyl records, but as costs increased and sales decreased early in this decade, Tim shifted the focus of his label to the compact disc. His latest endeavor is a series of CD-R releases called "The Electric Underground" which strives to release smaller, up-and-coming bands to consumers at a minimal cost.

"It is difficult for small labels to quantify the effect that mp3 has had on album sales," Tim says. "Most labels are opposed to the piracy of full works in favor of the authorized posting of selections from full works and I am no different in that regard. Underground labels probably have less to fear from piracy and more to be gained from promotional mp3s since our very great task is 'breaking through' to record buyers with new bands and new sounds."

Tim says the high costs that go into producing records - the cost of the studio recording, the pressing, the sleeves - make any pirating of the final product hurt even more, especially when the product is expected to only move a couple thousand copies at most. "I spent nearly $5000 on the most recent recording by a band on my label, a band who has sold no more than 1300 copies of any one of their previous albums. Every sale lost through theft of the complete work adds incrementally to the already tenuous economics of releasing a biggish-budget underground release with small projected sales."

One advantage small labels have over the typical massive major labels is the ability to quickly react to changing market conditions. As the market for Ramones-influenced pop-punk decreased in the late 1990s, Tim restructured his label. Because he runs such a small operation, shifting the focus from 7" vinyl and full-length, jewel-cased compact discs to poly-sleeved CD-R releases hasn't been a problem.

"Tiny labels are able to adapt rapidly and radically to changing conditions in the music world," says Tim, who also owns and manages a shoe store in his native Corvallis, Oregon. "I don't think that mp3 on the Internet has significantly helped or hindered sales for my label, largely because I have avoided making use of promotional mp3s. The prices of my shrink-wrapped CDs are low enough and the package nice enough that people...

"Call me a capitalist pig, but I have seen count­less stores and distribu­tors go out of business in the last couple of years and I think it is a shame."

-Jimi Cheetah, Cheetah's Records
Another West Coast independent punk label shares Tim's views. Cheetah's Records, an upstart Bay Area label founded by former Screw 32 bassist Jimi Cheetah, produces records for a wide variety of punk band, branching out so far as to include a band from my own home state of Indiana, The Beautys. Jimi has utilized mp3s on his label's web site, but has also felt the burn of having his records pirated.

"The negative side of the Internet in my opinion would be when we see releases that haven't even come close to being recouped that are available for free on Napster," Jimi told me, citing his own experiences in his former band as fuel to his fire. "I don't think any of us are expecting to get rich off of putting out these releases, but the goal of the artist is to make art, create and live your passion. A lot of that passion can be destroyed slaving away at some job just to make rent."

"If William Shakespeare had not been compensated for his plays and was doomed to work a day job, partly to do with any time he created something it was given away for free, would we have ever seen most of his great works?"

The upside to the Internet for both Cheetah's Records and Mutant Pop Records has been the easy exposure it provides and the ease which costumers can order records directly online. The labels rely on the Internet for part of their initial business, hooking return sales by inserting a print catalog of releases into the parcel being sent. The Internet remains a mixed blessing, though both Tim and Jimi appreciate the positive effects it has had on their labels.

But every rose has its thorn.

"I have the double pleasure of seeing the first Screw 32 record up on Napster for free," Jimi laments, "and the label that put it out skipped town and stopped paying royalties on it about three years ago."

"Isn't it great when everybody but the artist benefits from the art?"
Coming Soon:

Look for features on local bands, columns, reviews, interviews and articles on music-relevant issues. If you have suggestions for content, please e-mail your ideas to us: rocknrollzine@theretreads.com

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