

The Final Cut

Plotting world domination from Altoona

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

D'RATING SYSTEM:

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

WE KNOW WHAT YOU ARE WONDERING...What happened to our year end issue? We at Cut headquarters were faced with the same dilemma as calendar-watchers worldwide. When does the new Millennium actually begin? Jan. 1, 2000 or Jan. 1, 2001? We decided that we weren't really sure, and didn't really care. So we will do our official year-end and Millennium/Millenium issue next issue. Millennium/Millenium will recap the Millenium Music Conference in Harrisburg Feb. 10-13, and feature all the end of year, end of decade, end of century, end of the world crap you wanted in a Millennium issue.

Hats off to the folks at EyeCatchers here in Altoona, for being the new printers of our print edition! Part of the reason for our 6-month hiatus recently was that we suddenly found ourselves without access to a copier/printer to run copies of the Cut with. But EyeCatchers has stepped in, and the Cut print edition lives. Also thanks to Ron at Rockpage for keeping us online.

Some final college football takes...Now that I have recovered from Penn State's late-season meltdown and fall from National Championship grace, here are my afterthoughts...It was tough to see the Nittany Lions lose the last three games, but at least they played tough and had a legit shot to win each. They didn't get blown out by Michigan and Michigan State like they did in 1997. And State QB Kevin Thompson was one gutsy S.O.B., especially during the Michigan and Michigan State games, bouncing back after numerous hits to keep Penn State in each game. So while PSU didn't achieve the dream, my hat's still off to them for a good effort in the toughest conference in college football this year, the Big Ten. I accept Scoreboard.

And as Joepa recently said at a Big Ten coaches' conference, Penn State fans need to realize - the Lions' chances of winning a national championship are going to

be far less playing in the Big Ten, unless College Football does institute a full-fledged playoff scenario like they do in basketball. The Big Ten is tough year after year, and like this year, its member schools often blemish each others' records, so that nobody in the Big Ten is undefeated and in a position to play in the national championship game. Sad to say, but Penn State would have had a better shot of playing for the national championship if they would have joined another conference, like the BIG LEAST or the ATLANTIC COAST-to-the-national-championship Conferences.

Let's face it, Florida State gets to the national championship game nearly every year because the only tough regular season game they play every year is their non-conference backyard brawl against Florida! And though I like Virginia Tech, the Hokies didn't exactly have a killer conference schedule this year, either. And the BIG TWELVE (a.k.a. Big 2 + 10) rarely gives Nebraska much competition, except for Texas and last year's K-State team. I'll give my respects to the SEC for being tough this year, because like the Big Ten, all those teams knocked each other out of championship contention as well.

Kind of ironic - after Joe Paterno lobbied for years for a playoff system in college football, the BCS system is finally implemented, and Joe and his Lions still don't get to benefit from it due to Penn State's membership in the brutal Big Ten. Sucks for them.

The Super Bowl kicked ass. I was rooting for Tennessee, and I felt the anguish of "The Longest Yard, the Sequel." What a dramatic finish! My fave commercial this year had to be the e-trade company (which was, like, all the commercials) ad featuring the grizzled cowboys driving the herd of housecats across the prairie. For some strange reason, this one had me howling!

By now you've heard about rock's newest "family" - and I'm not talking about Halestorm - I'm talking about lesbian couple Melissa Etheridge and Julie Cypher, revealing recently that the father of their two children is none other than veteran rocker David Crosby. The children of this "union" by artificial insemination are 3-year-old daughter Bailey and 1-year-old son Beckett. Let me see if I have this straight - Melissa and Julie are apparently the "moms," if you will; and David is the "father," though he will have no role in raising the children. Not to mention that Crosby has a history of chemical abuse problems. Why do I get the feeling that these two children are going to have anything BUT a "normal" childhood or life?

'Tis all for now. Belated Merry Christmas, Happy Y2K, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, Groundhog Day, whatever...

On with d'reviews...



TYPE O NEGATIVE - WORLD COMING DOWN (*Roadrunner*) It's been said of coroners, undertakers and people who work in the death professions that after witnessing death on a regular basis, many of them become desensitized to it. Apparently Type O Negative frontman Peter Steele has seen enough death in his life that he has become desensitized to it, indicated by his periodic takes on the subject throughout Type O Negative's latest album, *World Coming Down*. Peter seems to accept death as the ultimate scoreboard on "Everyone I Love Is Dead" and the album's first single "Everything Dies," on both songs conceding that people around

him seem to die with regularity. His lyrics seem to indicate he has become hardened to death, fascinated and even amused by it. It is that thematic and ironic twist that underlies most of World Coming Down - songs about death, its rituals and fascination, performed over a gothic-meets-metal funereal musical tapestry, but tempered by tongue-in-cheek interludes that suggest that we never take Type O Negative too seriously. In the best Type O tradition, we hear funeral dirge-like backdrops crafted from the terse buzzsaw guitar chords of Kenny Hickey and the eerie organ theatrics of Josh Silver, topped by Peter's somber, Lurch-from-the-Addams-Family-on-downers vocals. At their best, Type O Negative play the funeral dirge thing for all its worth - such as on the album's first song, "White Slavery," with its choral backdrop underscoring Peter's downtrodden vocals towards the end. Type O is also very effective on "Everything Dies," where Peter's somber words about the death of others close to him are underscored by an almost lighthearted Josh Silver piano lick. Other highlights include the aforementioned "Everything I Love Is Dead;" the almost bluesy "Who Will Save the Sane;" the title track "World Coming Down" and "Pyretta Blaze," which starts out with a Sabbath riff before diverting to a pop-like chorus. And as if to stick an exclamation point on their pop influence, the group ends the album with a three-song Beatles medley including "Day Tripper," "If I Needed Someone" and "I Want You (She's So Heavy)." Type O Negative strips back their sound from the fuller and more-produced October Rust to a sound more reminiscent of their Bloody Kisses breakthrough. Type O Negative's blend of funeral arrangements, gothic/metallic dynamics and comic irony and wit combine to make World Coming Down another curious, alluring and captivating listen - if Type O's past output has made you a fan, you owe yourself World Coming Down - BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.1/10.0

LIMP BIZKIT - SIGNIFICANT OTHER (*Flip/Interscope*) I was admittedly slow to embrace the rap-meets-metal connection, and there's still some of it I'm not down with - a.k.a. Kid Rock. But I've developed a taste for Limp Bizkit, and Significant Other kicks total ass! Perhaps it is because Bizkit lead mouthpiece Fred Durst doesn't simply run smack, but has issues and reasons behind it. And perhaps it is that Bizkit is an uncompromisingly heavy band with wit, attitude and a sense of humor. And ultimately, I appreciate that Limp Bizkit has developed into a legitimate entity with a distinguishable style and sound, and isn't content to simply be known as the band that mutated George Michael's "Faith" into a modern metal favorite. Just about every tune on Significant Other connects, as Fred Durst spouts and raps about stuff many of us can relate to - such as how trivial everyday bulls**t can aggravate one to the point of wanting to "Break Stuff"...or the frustration of people borrowing cash and not paying it back on "I'm Broke." Or the hit "Nookie" itself, which cuts to the chase as to why Durst deals with the rest of the guy-girl relationship bulls**t. And returning the favor from Durst's guest appearance on Korn's Follow The Leader disc, Korn frontman Jonathan Davis turns in a guest vocal appearance on the album's straightforward heaviest tune, "Nobody Like You." Rapper Method Man also turns in a guest appearance voicing the smack on "N 2 Gether Now," and the album also features cameos from Primus' Les Claypool and MTV's Matt Pinfield. Co-produced by Terry Date and Limp Bizkit, with additional production by Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland, Significant Other never sits in one place too long, holding our attention with its ever-changing musical angles as it gearshifts from hip-hop electronica to brute-force metal. Yes, Bizkit drops an abundance of f-bombs through the course of the disc (an edited version of the disc is available), and the microscopic reprinted lyrics in the CD sleeve are damn near impossible to read. But bottom line - Limp Bizkit's Significant Other is one of my favorite discs of the year, and is worthy of all its hype. Definitely not a limp piece of plastic - make this biscuit a significant

addition to your CD collection. BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.3/10.0

LYNYRD SKYNYRD - EDGE OF FOREVER (*CMC International*) Thanks mainly to VH-1, Southern rock legends Lynyrd Skynyrd have returned to prominence in today's music picture, outdrawing many of today's current crop of bands at the live concert ticket windows. Their latest album, *Edge Of Forever*, shows that Lynyrd Skynyrd isn't content to ride on the nostalgia wave; they still have good music left in them. Skynyrd pulls no unusual punches on *Edge of Forever*, giving us their reliable blend of upbeat Southern rock and boogie numbers; a few tougher-rocking, more serious numbers; and a few nice ballads thrown in. Skynyrd's all-star line-up remains the core of guitarist Gary Rossington, keyboard man Billy Powell and bassist Leon Wilkeson, along with singer Johnny Van Zant, guitarists Rickey Medlocke and Hughie Thomasson, drummer Kenny Arnoff and backing singers Dale Krantz-Rossington and Carol Chase. Skynyrd gives us a new blue-collar working class anthem in the radio single "Workin'," which leads off the disc. The follow-up single, the sturdy rocker "Preacher Man," says that it's better to admit one's sins than preach righteousness from a glass house and fall from grace. The stern-rocking "Mean Streets" and the slower-rocking "Through It All" are songs about survival and perseverance, themes Skynyrd knows all too well. Skynyrd offers thoughts about the future; first on the ballad "Tomorrow's Goodbye," which warns us to take care of our world for future generations; and the title song "Edge of Forever," a song of hope for the new millennium which says now is a pivotal point in time where we could make - or break - the future. Another highlight is the somber and reflective ballad "Rough Around The Edges." Skynyrd is still witty and up for the occasional skirt-chase as well, evidenced by the playful rockers "Gone Fishin,'" "Money Back Guarantee" and "G.W.T.G.G." (Get it While The Gettin' is Good); where Billy Powell's key-tinkling plays a more prominent and mood-setting role. And the album ends with a witty number about visiting back home, "FLA." The current Lynyrd Skynyrd roster successfully keeps the spirit of the original Skynyrd model alive on this album - the songs sound honest and sincere, not contrived or forced. Johnny Van Zant has developed his own personality as the lead voice in the band - giving current Skynyrd its own voice, while remaining true to the group's traditional sound. Ron Nevison's production brings everything forward with a good balance, and *Edge of Forever* sounds strong and confident. With their VH-1 and concert success exposing them to a new generation of fans and awakening old ones, Lynyrd Skynyrd delivers a strong album that should keep old and new fans happy on *Edge of Forever*. This album proves these "street survivors" are back with a vengeance, and still have the fire in them. BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.2/10.0

YES - THE LADDER (*Beyond/BMG*) It seems that at least once a decade, Yes reinvents themselves with a new twist on their sound; and in phoenix-like fashion, Yes has done it again on *The Ladder*, updating their signature progressive rock sound with modern influences, specifically worldbeat and techno. Any questions that the 1999 edition of Yes - veteran singer Jon Anderson, guitarists Steve Howe and Billy Sherwood, bassist Chris Squire, drummer Alan White and keyboard player Igor Khoroshev - can still craft the lengthy and artsy epic are immediately answered by the 9 1/2-minute title opener "Homeworld (The Ladder)," which starts from quiet lead-in to oceanic choruses, underscored by Chris Squire's unmistakable basslines and tempered with Steve Howe's trademark guitarwork. With a slight Far-Eastern flavor, "It Will Be A Good Day (The River)" is optimistic and bright. The album's first single, "Lightning Strikes," displays a slight Caribbean lean, thanks in part to the presence of a horn section. The short minute-and-a-half tribal-flavored interlude

"Can I?" cleverly references "We Have Heaven" from the Fragile album, before Yes toys with modern techno beats (courtesy of electronic music guru Rhys Fulber) on "Face to Face." Yes gives us an upbeat love song ballad in "If Only You Knew," and "To Be Alive (Hep Yadda)" is likewise optimistic and upbeat. "Finally" is a throwback to Yes' early 80's 90125 sound, while "The Messenger" takes on a reggae-ish flavor. Yes gives us another memorable 9-minute-plus epic in "New Language," before the folksy "Nine Voices (Longwalker)" finishes the album. As with past Yes comebacks, The Ladder shows us that Yes is still Yes, and is unafraid of crafting those exquisite lengthy epics and oceanic arrangements. But likewise, Yes shows a willingness to expand, grow and experiment on The Ladder, evidenced by the worldbeat exercises and the use of modern technology. Beyond the musicality of the album, though, Yes gives us perhaps their most optimistic album on The Ladder, as the lyrics throughout are upbeat messages of enlightenment, self-discovery, hope for the future and spirituality. Finally, The Ladder was one of the final albums to be produced by veteran studio ace Bruce Fairbairn prior to his death last year, and the album is dedicated in his memory. Yes proves their artistry and continued musical growth on The Ladder, a worthy successor in the line of Yes classics like The Yes Album, Fragile, Close to the Edge, 90125 and Big Generator.

RATING 9.0/10.0

STYX - BRAVE NEW WORLD (*CMC International*) In their earlier heyday, Chicago progressive rockers Styx achieved their greatest popularity with their 1980 concept album Paradise Theater. Nearly 20 years later, sparked by their resurgent popularity on the concert trail and exposure to a new generation of rockers via VH-1, Styx has returned with another concept album, Brave New World. On Paradise Theater, Styx used the closing of a famous Chicago theater as a vehicle to step into the past and examine a simpler, more innocent time. On Brave New World, on the other hand, Styx asks if we have lost our innocence and simplicity in this "brave new world," and examines whether or not the Information Age is really our salvation. Styx survivors James Young, Dennis DeYoung, Tommy Shaw and Chuck Panozzo, along with current drummer Todd Sucherman, wax philosophic over this question through Brave New World's fourteen tracks, building up to the climactic reggae-flavored "High Crimes & Misdemeanors (Hip-Hop-Cracy)," which slams various downfalls of modern society such as talk show hosts, lying corporations, flip-flopping politicians, and ultimately the decline of morals and standards in our society. Lyrically, Styx does a credible job here, with the words cleverly tying together the overall theme. Musically, though, the album is uneven, and never really unites into a cohesive-sounding whole. Styx jumps between several different styles and sounds, from driving rockers to worldbeat to modernistic, to soapy Dennis DeYoung ballads. While the album as a whole is uneven, there are definite highlights that make it a worthwhile listen...the title song "Brave New World" with its slight Far-Eastern-sounding slant; the radio singles "Number One" and the charging rocker "Everything Is Cool;" the ballad "Fallen Angel," "Heavy Waters," "High Crimes & Misdemeanors" and "Just Fell In." I give Styx credit for attempting this ambitious undertaking, even if not all the pieces fit together comfortably; Brave New World says that Styx still has something to say about the state of our world, and can still craft some interesting tunes to get their point across. Worth a listen.

RATING 7.4/10.0

STAIN'D - DYSFUNCTION (*Flip/Elektra*) Once it was established that psychotic modern rage metal - practiced by Korn, Limp Bizkit, Coal Chamber and the like - was the "next big thing" in rock music, you could practically feel the earth rumble from all the other record companies running around and trying to play catch up by signing

their versions of these successful bands, and cashing in on the bandwagon. Staind may or may not be one of that "bandwagon" wave of bands. One thing's for certain, they possess the psychotic rage sound and aesthetic, displayed on their album *Dysfunction*. On the opening track "Suffocate" and closing track "Spleen," Staind is Son of Korn; and on the current radio single "Mudshovel," Staind sounds like the mutant offspring of Korn and Coal Chamber. On most of the rest of *Dysfunction*, though, you get a better sense of where Staind's base sound lies - the modern angst-metal formula of manic depressive verses leading up to explosive spleen-venting choruses and tantrums. But having said all of that, I actually do like this album. Call Staind bandwagon or derivative if you like, but the band does seem to be able to put interesting tunes together, evidenced by most of *Dysfunction*'s nine tracks (plus bonus acoustic track, should you seek to check it out). Along with the aforementioned tunes, other highlights include the slow and entrancing first single from the album, "Just Go;" "Me;" the Helmet-like "A Fist" and the explosive "Crawl." Singer Aaron Lewis is good at conveying both Maynard James Keenan-styled pent-up inner anger, as well as Jonathan Davis-styled blind psychotic rage. And guitarist Mike Mushok throws enough emotional instability into his wild riffs to convey the unsafe soundscape Aaron needs to get his tantrums across. Time will tell whether Staind is a legitimate modern metal entity that will survive beyond the psycho-metal trend. But for the moment, if raging modern metal is your thing, Staind's *Dysfunction* represents the genre well, and is definitely worth checking out.

RATING 8.9/10.0

BUCKCHERRY - BUCKCHERRY (SKG) As diversified and subdivided as the rock and roll genre has become in this day and age, it's still possible for a straightforward ROCK AND ROLL BAND to come along, kick ass and shake things up. In 1999, enter Buckcherry. Seemingly out of nowhere, this band came on like gangbusters and delivered one of the year's rowdiest tunes in "Lit Up," and a self-titled album that simply kicks ass and takes names start to finish. The base sound is AC/DC-meets-Guns'n'Roses-in-a-dark-alley raunch rock, with a slight Black Crowes-styled blues-rock edge and a touch of punk spit thrown in. Lead howler Joshua Todd is the rowdiest rock frontman to come along since Jackyl's Jesse James Dupree, and his backing corps is equally lethal; drummer Devon Glenn slams his beats with authority, with bassist Jonathan "J.B." Brightman's commanding bottom end and guitarist Keith Nelson's slash-and-burn riffage attack without letting up. There's not a weak tune in the bunch; whether you like fast, slamming fare like the opener "Dead Again," the punkish-leaning "Crushed" or the driving rocker "Related;" midtempo assaults like the hit "Lit Up," "Lawless and Lulu," "Get Back" or the rowdy closer "Drink the Water;" or slower numbers like the slow-building "Check Your Head," the bluesier "For the Movies" and "Baby," or even the soulful and Stonesey "Borderline." Buckcherry sounds and feels raw - give at least partial credit to the production team of Terry Date and Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones, who also contributes some guitar work here. Methinks rock has found its new Bad Boys here, and bottom line: Buckcherry is an album you survive the work week for - grab a six-pack of your favorite foamy adult beverage, crank this mother as loud as your stereo and windows can withstand, and ENJOY! Easily one of the year's best debuts...BUY OR DIE!

RATING 9.5/10.0

ASYLUM SUITE - ASYLUM SUITE (*Southern Tracks*) I raved about this band before...From eastern Tennessee, Asylum Suite's first self-titled CD introduced us to that refreshing, seemingly-forgotten-by-the-rest-of-the-music-industry combination of catchy song hooks, strong melodies, powerful singing and playing and guitar-

driven crunch. Now signed to indy label Southern Tracks Records, Asylum Suite gives us another self-titled disc, and this one's even better, featuring several new tracks and remixed/updated tunes from the first album. As before, the base sound is midtempo melodic crunch rock of the Cinderella/Def Leppard/Jackyl variety, with more sharp hooks than fellow Tennessean Bill Dance pulls out of largemouths in a given week! Produced both by Rodney Mills and Cinderella's Fred Coury, this Asylum Suite disc gives us a baker's dozen tracks, and they are all keepers! Take your pick - the slightly grunge-leaning opener "Wake Up;" driving midtempo assaults like the updated "I," the anthemic "Tip of My Tongue," the acoustic-driven "The Only One," "Smile" and "Call On Me;" ornate, detailed power ballads like "All She Needed," "the redone "Medicine Head," "Almost Gone" and "Holdin' On;" funk-ed-up crunchers like "Days Gone Down" and the closer "Blind;" the environmentally-conscious rocker "Notion of Change"...Hell, it's ALL good! Guitarist Terry McCoy's riffs beef up these melodies, while drummer Randy Nash's and bassist Howie Owenby's rhythms sound hungry and on the attack. And then there's singer Buddy Capps, whose raspy-edged vocals are strong and authoritative throughout the disc, with a little hint of Jesse James Dupree and a Southern preacher on "Tip of My Tongue." As I said with their earlier album, I only hope that the music industry gets back to recognizing strong tunes and bands that can actually play their instruments and sing, so groups like Asylum Suite can get the recognition they deserve. Asylum Suite kicks ass just like its predecessor, and if this band gets back up into PA anytime soon, I think a road trip to check them out is in order - keep me posted, Shel! BUY OR DIE!!! (Can be bought at the group's show, or write the Asylum Suite Fan Club, 2109 Hoitt Ave., Knoxville, TN 37917. E-mail the band at asylumsuite@hotmail.com , or visit their website at www.asylumsuite.com)

RATING 9.4/10.0

ANGRA - FIREWORKS (*Century Media*) Not so long ago, it was laughable to consider Brazil as a location where quality heavy metal music originated. But spearheaded by Sepultura/Soufly and Brujeria, Brazil has become a key contributor to the world of metal, and Angra is a band threatening to continue that legacy - evidenced by the goods offered on their latest disc, Fireworks. But unlike the more aggressive tendencies of Brazilian brethren Sepultura/Soufly and Brujeria, Angra specializes in progressive, classical-flavored power metal of the Helloween/Dream Theater variety. Singer Andre Matos frequently brings to mind the high-flying vocal histrionics of a younger Geoff Tate! The rest of Angra - guitarists Kiko Louriero and Rafael Bittencourt, bassist Luis Mariutti and drummer Ricardo Confessori - craft detailed and melodic instrumental backdrops that combine both power and technical ecstasy. Just about every tune qualifies as a self-contained mini-adventure of its own, with a beginning, middle and end. The opening barrage "Wings of Reality" starts and ends fierce and fast, but decelerates to a slow and shadowy midsong interlude. "Petrified Eyes" steadily evolves and progresses towards its torrid rocking finish. "Lisbon" is complex and yet catchy, reminiscent of peak Dream Theater; while the progressive speed metal of "Metal Icarus" more closely resembles Helloween. There's the slower and spacier title track "Fireworks," the aggressive and metallic "Extreme Dream," "Gentle Change" with its piano and congas midsection, the appropriately fast burner "Speed," and the slightly techno finisher "Rainy Nights." Produced by veteran knob-spinner Chris Tsangerides (Thin Lizzy, Tygers of Pan Tang, Judas Priest), Fireworks sounds thunderous and grandiose, enabling Angra to achieve at least some of their lofty ambitions through the course of the disc. The album's only drawback is that Angra seems to over-reach at times here, and some of the compositions sound overly complex and contrived. But when the compositions do connect, the results are stunning, and Angra shows the potential for greatness more

often than not here. Remember the name - Angra just might be onto something here.

RATING 8.4/10.0

SAMAEL - ETERNAL (*Century Media*) This is the first album I have ever actually heard from this band, which is probably a good thing. Switzerland's Samael started out in the late 80's as a Satanic death metal band, but judging by their latest album, *Eternal*, they have apparently progressed a long way. The base sound is shadowy techno-meets-metal, suggesting what might happen if KMFDM, Rammstein and Celtic Frost all confronted each other in a dark alley. Terse techno beats and metallic riffs, understated bestial vocals and abstract, shadowy lyricism combine for an alluring, entrancing sound. Driven by the brotherly duo of singer/guitarist Vorph and keyboardist/programming adventurer Xy, Samael explores the dark cyber-metal frontier over a dozen tracks, with each track taking on a mood and flavor of its own. But ultimately, Samael is consumed by its own techno-metal overindulgence here - the arrangements are so deep and oceanic, Vorph's vocal growl is swallowed in the mix, and his abstract lyrical visions are largely unintelligible in the din. I give Samael credit for their progress and willingness to experiment, but the overdone mix ultimately buries the group's lofty lyrical ambitions, leaving this listener scratching his head and wondering what the hell is really going on here. Pass...

RATING 5.5/10.0

BOUNCING SOULS - HOPELESS ROMANTIC (*Epitaph*) From New Jersey by way of the Big Apple, Bouncing Souls delivers a bouncing, jubilant set of tunes on their latest disc, *Hopeless Romantic*. The sound is high-velocity "fun-core" - slamming punk rock with strong melodies and upbeat, fun lyrics. The sound taps the goofball fun ethic of classic Ramones, while not venturing far from the neighborhood of better-known contemporaries like the Offspring and Rancid. Unlike a lot of current-day punk, you actually remember several of Bouncing Souls' tunes after you've heard them. Highlights include the title song "Hopeless Romantic," "'87," the punkish boogie "Bullying the Jukebox," the gang-shout "You're So Rad," the hilarious break-up song duet "Wish Me Well (You Can Go To Hell)" (with female vocal by Kara Wethington), more aggressive rockers like "Monday Morning Ant Brigade" and "It's Not the Heat, It's the Humanity," and my personal favorite, "Ole!," the group's anthemic statement of purpose with an irresistible chorus hook. And that's the difference between Bouncing Souls and much of the run-of-the-mill punk out there - the Souls come up with decent song hooks throughout this album, and you find yourself humming or singing along! The punk rock resurgence of the past few years seems to have peaked, but I think Bouncing Souls' attention to song hooks and fun words will keep them viable after much of the rest of the punk pack has faded into obscurity. Bottom line - *Hopeless Romantic* is hopelessly catchy, and it rocks! I like!

RATING 8.9/10.0

HATRED - THE OFFERING (*self-produced*) With a name like Hatred, you were perhaps looking for music with a bright positive outlook and hope for the future? Yeah, right! From Virginia, Hatred has opened shows for King Diamond, Cannibal Corpse and Overkill, so you can safely conclude that peace, love and flower-power aren't their forte. Hatred unleashes the Beast on their latest CD, *The Offering*, ten tracks of over-the-top, apocalyptic world-gone-to-Hell extreme metal. Everything about Hatred is intense - the hyperspeed double-kick bass drum-driven havoc wreaked by David Castillo; the quaking basswork of Julio Castillo; the searing and tenacious guitarwork of Tim Clayborne and Joe Jablonski; and Tim's feral Banshee-

scream vocals. Hatred's lyrical diagnosis offered up here is that mankind's screw-ups have opened the door for Satan and his ilk to wreak havoc and prey on the faithless. Most of these tunes are raging, rampant exercises in intensity and ferociousness, offering little variation from song to song. One notable exception, however, is "Trust No One," which starts off as a slow, dark ballad with a Bruce-era Iron Maiden flavor, before exploding into a more intense assault towards song's end. Other standouts for me included the opening title track "The Offering," "Desolation" and the closer "Coming of the Tide." If the world is going to Hell in Y2K, this album would be appropriate mood music to blast on your car stereo while you're racing through town firing off your rifle New Year's Eve! Hatred's *The Offering* is intense, dark, and ferocious - if extreme heavy metal is your thing, this is worth looking into. (Can be purchased by sending \$10 ppd. to Hatred, P.O. Box 10264, Alexandria, VA 22310 [check to Joe Jablonski]. You can also e-mail Hatred at hatredva@aol.com)

RATING 8.2/10.0

BROKEN NECK - BROKEN NECK (*self-produced*) If rock music's progress is tracked by the advent of changing trends every few years, it could be argued that rage is rock's current flavor of choice as it enters the new century. Whatever today's generation of rockers is angry about, the current rock scene is dominated by bands venting and unleashing tantrums. Korn. Rage Against the Machine. Coal Chamber. Tool. Limp Bizkit. Soulfly. Staind. And now, from the Altoona area, Broken Neck. Word of this collaboration started circulating during the fall, and in December, the group has unleashed their eleven-song self-titled disc. The sound is modern metallic rage inspired by contemporaries like Korn and Coal Chamber, with some Slayer-styled brutality thrown in for good measure. The guitars of Phil Wagner and Bill Rickard generate brash and malicious riffage, backed by the terse bass lines of Dan Martino and the explosive drumming of Josh Anspach. Atop it all, the lead snarls and bellows of frontman Scott Russell, whose vocal intensity has increased exponentially from his prior stints in *Misconceived* and the short-lived *Cucuplex*. On the surface, there's not a whole lot of variation between Broken Neck's eleven tirades, but on repeat listens subtle differences start to stand out, such as the Slayerish speed breaks on "Lit Up," "Git" and "#7" (coincidentally the 7th track on the CD); Dan Martino's funky bass lead-in on "Duster," and the Primus-like eccentricity of the disc's closing barrage, "Interrogation." Other highlights include the monstrous lead-off manifesto "Here It Is," the psychotic rap-metal of "Witness," and the cosmically-mixed "mind Whore." On the minus side, the production mix seems to favor the guitars and bass over Scott's vocals and Josh's drums, but this is ultimately a minor glitch in what is an otherwise impressive introduction to Altoona's new heavyweight contenders. Broken Neck is serious about taking this beyond the scope of the local scene, so perhaps the rest of the state and country will be hearing from this group before all is said and done. For the moment, Broken Neck is a fierce and tenacious debut - crash helmet recommended. (Can be purchased at the group's shows.)

RATING 8.6/10.0

SCAPEGOAT - FEEDING THE BALD MONKEY (*King Pin*) I LIKE! Harrisburg-based Scapegoat is presently spreading their brand of metal carnage on live stages across the state, and on their second CD *Feeding The Bald Monkey*, they demonstrate they have the goods! The base sound is heavy, snarling, Pantera/Slayer-flavored metallic pain and suffering. Scapegoat dishes out a fat, savage sound - the rhythm battery of drummer Eric "Space" Dengler and bassist Matt Miller are capable of cranking out either slow monstrous festering backdrops or rapidfire torrid rants of aggression. The guitar tandem of James and Milhouse dish out the punishment, too, gnashing out hefty chords and tenacious searing leads. And frontman Mark "Boags" Bogart

possesses both range and rage, backing both with ample lungpower. All eleven songs are brute-force displays of metal firepower, yet each is different and cleverly put together. Pick your poison - the savage opening anthem "Visions of Reality," the dual-speed "Beneath," the merciless "Chainfall," the slower and darker "Salt In My Wounds" (my personal fave), "Alone," "Regret," the monstrous "Why People Get Hurt," "Dirty Drain" and "The Product" - hell, it's all killer! The production is full, enabling Scapegoat to sound all-out brutal and heavy, with no regard for life or limb. Based on this disc, Scapegoat deserves to be on an Ozzfest stage sometime soon! Serious metal fans need to be seeking out this band and disc, this is the real deal! Feeding the Bald Monkey will feed your appetite for punishing and heavy music - BUY OR DIE!!! (Can be purchased at the band's shows, or visit the band's website at www.scapegoat649.com, or call [717] 774-6523 [ask for Milhouse]).

RATING 9.2/10.0

WHISKEY HIGH - LIVE 92 (*self-produced*) Anybody who has followed the career of Pittsburgh's Whiskey High to date knows that the band has steadily progressed in a heavier and heavier direction since their start in the early 90's. Hearing Whiskey High performing live now, it is easy to forget that when they started, their influences were more 80's-rooted. Live 92 serves both as a reminder of that past, and as a closure to that period of their career. As a time reference, this live footage was recorded back before most of this area knew singer Scott Boyd as "Woody," and back before lead axe Mike Palone shaved his head! The live footage was recorded during 1992 at Ricky's in Ford City, PA and Prince Valiant's in Pittsburgh (correct me if I'm wrong, but I think both places are now defunct), and also at Club XTC. Despite the norm of most live albums, we hear not live versions of the Whiskey High studio stuff we already know and love, but several old Whiskey High favorites that hadn't yet made it onto plastic. In fact, the only Whiskey High studio tunes that resurface in concert here are "The Mission," "How Can You Lie" and "Axeslayer" (we're talking the nine-minute live version with the extended Mike Palone axe dissection solo - AXE-CELLENT!). We finally get that patented Whiskey High kickass show intro on record ("Old Intro") to open the disc, leading into the group's title song "Whiskey High," recorded at Ricky's. From that same show we hear "Giver of Love," "The Mission," "Blow My Fuse" (NOT the Kix tune) and "Prisoner." From the Prince Valiant's show, we hear "How Can You Lie" and "Axeslayer." Whiskey High also gives us one studio track, first started in 1991 but finally completed for this disc - "Money Changes Everything." Finally, from Club XTC but only recorded on two-track cassette, we get rough takes on "Hot As They Come," "I'm Ready" and "No Advice." Produced by Mike Palone and recorded and mixed by Klondike Studios, Live 92 sounds mostly full and appropriately raw as a live album should. And bottom line, it is good to hear a few of these songs finally see the light of day, and also hear a few of the legendary live takes any Whiskey High fan should already know, love and recognize by now! If you are any sort of Whiskey High fan, or are a veteran of the group's early years, you owe yourself a copy of Live 92 for nostalgia sake at least. And look forward to the group's new studio disc sometime early in 2000! (Can be obtained at Whiskey High shows, or visit the group's website at www.whiskeyhigh.com, also e-mail the group at info@whiskeyhigh.com)

RATING 8.4/10.0

THE HURRICANES - LIVE AT PETER C'S VOLUME I (*self-produced*) The Hurricanes, over their decade-plus of live performances on local stages and through their various line-ups, have become an institution on this area's music scene. And to Hurricanes aficionados, that is no mystery. Every Hurricanes live show has something fresh, every show unveils some new edge or nuance heretofore not seen.

The Hurricanes have always been three musicians at the top of their game (plus their guests) giving it their all. And their reputation as a live entity is what has always shined brightest about the Hurricanes. That is why it is only fitting that the group's first CD releases are live albums that capture the essence of this band live. The Hurricanes issued a live album early in 1999, but it was a loosely-assembled collection of live footage from a show during the popular John McKnight/Felix Kos/Bill Nusom edition of the group. While this initial disc had some magical moments featuring John McKnight, as a CD it was hastily assembled and the quality of the package was uneven. But *Live at Peter C's* is better organized as a CD, and is more accurate in depicting today's Hurricanes - singer/guitarist Felix Kos, bassist/singer Jeff Clapper and drummer Bob Watters. Recorded during a three-night block of live performances at Peter C's last year, *Live at Peter C's* is the Hurricanes as you might witness them on any given Thursday night at Peter C's, doing the southern/classic rock favorites you know and love. And as such, it smokes! From Jeff's throbbing bass lines that underscore the opening track "Mustang Sally;" to Bob's crisp, driving beat that fuels tunes like "Icy You" (the only Hurricanes original on this disc) along, to Felix's heated, multi-dimensional guitar fireworks throughout, *Live at Peter C's* captures the energy and talent that is the Hurricanes. Highlights are numerous, but take your pick - the aforementioned tunes, the 'Canes' take on "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" with Bob's slamming drum solo at the end, their version of Robin Trower's "Too Rolling Stoned" with Felix going ballistic on the distortion solo at the end, "The Ballad of Curtis Lowe" (though I'd love to hear the 'Canes' segueway into "The Saints Go Marching In" make it to CD someday), the show-stopper "Green Grass and High Tides," and the closing version of the Allmans' "Whipping Post." The recording is good given the equipment and smallness of the setting - crank the stereo up, and you will think you are sitting right there at Peter C's, taking it all in. All three players sound balanced, and the track selection gives all three Hurricanes their opportunities to shine in the spotlight. If you have experienced the excitement of the Hurricanes at Peter C's on a Thursday night, *Live at Peter C's* is a must for your CD collection, as it captures the live onstage storm that is the Hurricanes in all its glory. BUY OR DIE! (Can be bought at the group's shows, or visit the group's website at www.felixandthehurricanes.com).

RATING 9.1/10.0

NINE SIX NINE - OSTRACIZED (*self-produced*) Maybe it's the mine-drainage-tainted water, maybe it's the town's decaying industrial and economic base, or perhaps it's an undetected rabies epidemic there - but whatever the case, there are a bunch of pissed-off rockers in Clearfield, which have made this small community a hub for punk rock and hardcore. The all-age circuit flourishes in Clearfield, and the Clearfield scene is producing numerous pissed-off bands - among them, Nine Six Nine. *Ostracized* is their punishing six-song debut CD, and as I slipped it into my CD player, two questions immediately arose - first, what in the wide world of Clearfield are these guys so pissed off about? And second, whose dog is running at the mouth yapping outside? Wait, that isn't a dog, that is Nine Six Nine's singer! Just kidding...but when frontman Frank Rumfola goes off on *Ostracized's* six tantrums, his manic barking suggests Dino on *The Flintstones* with a severe case of rabies! Seriously, if you can handle Frank's doberman barking, Nine Six Nine musically is pretty competent. Guitarists Ken Wagner and Bryan Ketch, bassist Ed MacDonald and drummer Justin Strickland generate appropriate aggressive metalcore carnage with multispeed slamming beats and caustic chords a plenty. And when you get past the obvious aggression, Nine Six Nine shows a knack for clever and involved arrangements beyond the hardcore norm - evidenced right off the bat with the 8-minute-plus opening opus "Reality;" and also by the slower and more deliberate title

track "Ostracized." All six tracks are all-out aggression and anger, as Frank and Nine Six Nine vent steam over dishonesty, conformity and loss of individuality, and even the state government of Pennsylvania itself on "Killing Phrase." Produced by Bill Filer at Audible Images in Port Matilda, Ostracized sounds appropriately raw, jagged and unpolished. Frank's vocal agitation is best taken in small doses, and without a lyric sheet his apocalyptic screaming is difficult to understand. But otherwise, if you need appropriate mood music to knock craniums with your buds in the friendly neighborhood moshpit, Nine Six Nine's Ostracized gets the job done. (Can be purchased at the group's shows, call Frank at [814] 765-6483, or e-mail keeter@penn.com)

RATING 7.2/10.0

VOODOO BABIES - SUPER FINE THING (*self-produced*) Bottom line before you read anything else about this CD - lead Voodoo Baby Lori Bernish gets my nomination for instant divahood in the rock music biz, based on what she displays on this CD, 'nuff said! Lori gives a clinic on passionate and powerful singing on Super Fine Thing, running the total gamut of emotions from quiet resolve to agitated scorn and spite. Lori and the Voodoo Babies craft an impressive debut on Super Fine Thing, a powerful blend of modern rock/pop, funky rhythms and heated vocal displays. Lori's charged vocals speak for themselves, but her bandmates - guitarist Jay Scholl, bassist Matt Anderson and drummer Doug Heller (who has since been replaced in the band) - are capable of both outright rocking out and laying on the funky rhythms thick and heavy; and they succeed in doing both on just about every song here, providing a strong musical vehicle for Lori to do her thing. Speaking of which - As the band's lyricist and singer, Lori's lyrics seem to be constantly wary of male intentions, and seem poised to react at the first hint of trouble in the cat-and-mouse game that is the modern-day relationship. On the opener "He's Gone," Lori explores the point where someone else has entered the picture, and "he" wants to have his cake and eat it too. On "Come & Gone," Lori explores her own sophistication and complexities, while on the fast-and-funky "Somehow" Lori comes to the realization that - despite what "he" says - the relationship is going nowhere. The Voodoo Babies are best during the album's more explosive modern funk/rock displays, when both Lori and her bandmates go full-tilt - the aforementioned tunes, "No One," the disco-beat "Take It All," "Fall Apart," "Does It Really Matter" and the slightly spacey closer "I'll Save You." The remainder of Super Fine Thing finds the group varying between lighter and slower funk numbers, tapping a Dave Matthews-like sound on "Here's My Love," and even giving us an acoustic-gearred ballad in "Too Late." The album is well-produced and full-sounding, and the sound is crisp and balanced. Voodoo Babies have already garnered some national attention, and appeared as house band on the syndicated Jenny Jones TV show last fall. Super Fine Thing is a convincing argument in favor of the accolades the group has received thus far, and I suspect you will hear more from this band in the months ahead. A super fine debut - BUY OR DIE! (Can be bought at the group's shows, visit the group's website at www.voodoobabies.com or e-mail the band at voodooway1@aol.com)

RATING 9.0/10.0

BICYCLE THIEVES - BICYCLE THIEVES (*self-produced*) Bicycle Thieves is a Washington, D.C.-based foursome with a local connection - that connection being the group's singer and guitarist, Hollidaysburg native Jon Kaplan. Clocking in at a perfect 30 minutes, their self-titled, 5-song EP introduces us to Bicycle Thieves' convergence of musical styles into a cohesive, listenable whole. Bicycle Thieves' sound blends together light funk, pop, rock and jazz flavors into a catchy mix that ultimately makes you wish there were more than just five songs. But those five give us plenty

to be happy about, as we get alluring melodies with interesting plot twists and side journeys, soulful singing, and flashy instrumental displays. My favorite tune is the lightly funky opener "Running Down," with its crafty chorus hook and harmony vocals, underscored by the low croon of Mike Salamone's organ. There's the soulful "All That's Missing;" the jazz/funk "Happy New Year," the funky "Slingshot" with its hot mid-song guitar jam, and the rollercoaster closer "Light Down Low," which slows down at mid-song only to escalate into a full instrumental jam to close out both song and EP. All aspects of Bicycle Thieves' presentation click here - Jon's soulful vocals and hot guitarwork, the spicy and funky rhythms from bassist Scott Aronson and drummer John Dinsmore, and Mike Salamone's aforementioned smooth keyboard groan. The songs are all nicely put together, and the production is crisp and balanced. Bicycle Thieves are a rising force on the D.C. music circuit, and it is easy to hear why on their self-titled EP. Here's hoping Jon and company can make a swing up this way to perform live sometime soon. Worth checking out... (To obtain, write Bicycle Thieves, 1929 Calvert Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009; or e-mail Jon at jon321@juno.com)

RATING 9.0/10.0

GROUNDSWELL - CORRODE (*Gig*) From the ashes of Ned's Atomic Dustbin emerges Groundswell, and this EP, Corrode. The base sound is hard-hitting modern rock with a sense of melody. Dustbin songwriter and singer Jonn Penney, guitarist Andy King, bassist Gary Temple and drummer Tim Gascoigne give us a deep, hard-edged guitar-driven sound on the title song "Corrode," mix in a techno-ish rhythm on "Second Hand," mix a little more aggression on "You Think," and show a sense of subtlety and texture on the acoustic-leaning "Find Out Why." Groundswell shows a knack for song hooks and variation over these four tracks, and capably execute on the diverse song selection offered up here. Based on the goods offered on Corrode, Groundswell is a name you could eventually hear on a radio someday; if Jonn's past resume with Ned's Atomic Dustbin means anything to the record company powers that be. For the moment, a decent sampler. (To obtain, write Gig Records, 520 Butler Avenue, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742; or visit the Gig's website at www.gigrecords.com)

RATING 8.5/10.0

DA BOY FROM DA BURGH

By Mark Da Boy

Wow! Where has the time gone? This'll probably be my last report of this century. I don't mean to sound cynical, but hey, it's just another day. Let's get on with living in the here and now. First off, a very big THANK YOU to J.P. for allowing Felony In Progress as guests on "The Backyard Rocker." So what if Joel forgot the words to my song...not once, but twice! And flash news for MAP Heads, the new Mark Allen Project is in the can, so to speak. "Angst for Fun & Prophet" is the name, and I'm

quite proud of it. I started writing for it in '94; started recording for it in '95, and finished the vocals earlier this year! Thanks to F.I.P. guitar god Monte Erwin for pitching in with guitar and vocals. I'm getting a few CD copies made and am working on a cover. It should be available to the masses (J.P.) by early January. Da Girl has been very busy. She and Monte's wife have started a baking business called "Flour Power." They're making pies, pierogies, cheesecakes and such, and it seems to be taking off. Ok, enough catching up. On with the reviews...

SANTANA - SUPERNATURAL (*Arista*) Whodathunk it? After 30 years of making music, Carlos Santana and his brand of Chi-Chi's Rock is back in vogue! Could it be because of Latin music's current 15 minutes of fame thanks to Ricky "Loca" Martin and Jennifer Lopez? Could it be because he's teamed with some of today's and yesterday's stars including Matchbox 20's Rob Thomas, Dave Matthews, Lauryn Hill, Everlast, and Eric Clapton? Or could it be that his guitar is so distinct that it transcends whatever musicians he works with? It's probably a mixture of all of the above. Baby boomers will probably like the straight ahead Santana of old on such tracks as "(Da Le) Yaleo" and "The Calling" featuring Clapton; while younger listeners will embrace duets with Everlast and Dave Matthews. And everyone loves "Smooth!" It is refreshing to see Mister Humble Santana receive long-overdue fame again. It's almost Supernatural!
RATING 8.7/10.0

GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALLSTARS - DOPE DOGS (*Dogone Records*) Speaking of comebacks, it's wonderful to hear Funk Pioneer George Clinton "givin' up da funk" old school style. Sounding more like Funkadelic than Parliament, George Clinton is layin' da groove with some smokin' guitars. Like his previous efforts, Mister Clinton and a cast of many has chosen a concept...this time dogs...to get his point across. Characters with names like Dope Dog, Pepe The Pill Popper, and Fifi. There's rappin' and even sampling of some of their own songs thrown in! Hey, everybody else has stolen from George Clinton! Some jams tend to drag and get repetitive, but overall, an improved effort to recapture some of uncut funk of da bomb!
RATING 8.6/10.0

SUGAR RAY - 14:59 (*Atlantic/Lava*) Not every alternative group these days has to shout the F-word every five seconds to get their point across. That's the first thing that impressed me about Sugar Ray. Second, they're kind of a modern day version of Queen in that every song sounds different than the one before. A hodge podge of thrash ("New Direction"), Beatles (the cool mid-tempo hit "Someday"), classic rock (a contemporary take on Steve Miller's "Abracadabra"), country ("Aim for Me"), reggae ("Live & Direct), and more. Plus it must be nice that lead singer Mark McGrath is constantly voted "Sexiest Singer" in modern polls. (Wait till the new MAP!) The musicianship is tight including the trend to have a scratch dj in the band for good measure. Who knows what the 14:59 reference means...With that aside, this is an enjoyable journey.
RATING 9.0/10.0

SNEAK REVIEWS

By Da Boy Lyons and D'Scribe Ebert

KID ROCK - DEVIL WITHOUT A CAUSE (*Atlantic/Lava*)

DA BOY: Excuse me while I stand on my soapbox for a moment and defend Kid Rock for trying to save Rock Music. In my opinion and the opinion of many others, Rock as we know it is almost dead. The new generation considers what our generation grew up on (Ozzy, Kiss, Nugent, Beatles, AC/DC, and much more) as laughable. To them, even alternative music is considered contrived. The kids of today are into what I call "extremes music." It's either gangsta rap or pop fluff...with very little middle ground. Sure, there are a few bands like The Offspring, Metallica and others, but they are considered the exception, not the rule. Rock and Roll is taking smaller pieces of today's charts. Which brings me to Kid Rock. The rock and rap connection is nothing new. Aerosmith & Run DMC, Anthrax and Public Enemy, early Beastie Boys. But now, here comes Kid Rock. Very much "keeping it real" with clever raps, but the music is straight ahead rock and roll. Almost classic rock sounding. Kid Rock should open up a bait shop because his hooks are so infectious! Just one listen to his hits "Bawitdaba" or "Cowboy" and you either get it...or you don't. There's even a country-flavored ballad that the K-I-D sings, yes sings the whole way through, and it's great! Is there a down side? Sure. The swearing is very over the top at times, enough to make even me cringe, but after all, it's rap. With that aside, I can only hope to hear more from Kid Rock in the new century.

RATING 9.75/10.0

D'SCRIBE: Have you ever heard a song so damned annoying that it just sticks around in your head for days on end? For me, Kid Rock's "Bawitdaba" is such a song. I despised this song since the start, but damned if I don't find the riff and that stupid chorus resounding through my head!! I've had this album for a while, so I finally conceded that if a song could stick in my brain like "Bawitdaba," Kid Rock's Devil Without A Cause warranted a little closer examination. Kid Rock's first album was pretty forgettable, but on Devil Without A Cause, the Kid comes up with some memorable riffs that have already scored him two major hits in "Bawitdaba" and its predecessor, "I Am The Bullgod." Kid Rock's schtick is egotistical street rap meets metal dynamics over 14 tracks. Kid Rock runs a lot of street smack and bragging through the course of the album, never really saying anything of substance but threatening some sort of record for dropping f-bombs on one album. Besides the first two hits, a few tunes stand out - the current single "Cowboy," the Rage Against The Machine-like "Fist Of Rage," and the curious if vulgar closer "Black Chic, White Guy." Most of the rest of this did little for me. The title song "Devil Without A Cause" is just blatant testosterone smack-running, and the little kid boasting about the size of his manhood is one of the dumbest things I've ever heard in 15 years of album reviews! Kid Rock strikes me as the late 90's answer to Vanilla Ice, the "Great White Hope" rapper wrapped in metallic trim. The hits have earned Kid Rock his 15 minutes of fame and fortune, but I seriously doubt anybody will be talking about this clown ten years from now except as a passing novelty. Kid Rock is a lot of bluster and bravado, but this Devil Without A Cause is a devil without much lasting talent, either. I'll pass...

RATING 5.7/10.0

VERDICT: ONE THUMB UP, ONE THUMB DOWN

THE FINAL ENCORE

Concert reviews by D'Scribe unless otherwise noted

ZZ TOP/LYNYRD SKYNYRD/SCREAMIN' CHEETAH WHEELIES @ CIVIC ARENA, PITTSBURGH 10/3/99

It was billed as the tour that nobody thought could ever happen - the pairing of two of the giants of Southern rock, ZZ Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd. ZZ Top hadn't played in western PA in several years; Lynyrd Skynyrd's past two passes through the region were so wildly successful that their 1998 double-live disc *Lyve From Steel Town* was recorded at Coca Cola Star Lake Amphitheater outside the 'Burgh. The two rock juggernauts would jam on the same stage this night at Pittsburgh's Civic Arena.

As it turned out, the concert topped what turned out to be a special day all around. Before this concert had ever been announced, Coconuts Jim (a.k.a. Big Jim) and I were already planning to be in the 'Burgh this day to catch the Steelers/Jaguars game - my first Steeler game ever!

The initial game plan (ours, not the Steelers') was to arrive in Pittsburgh around 10 AM-ish and rendezvous with Jim's Pot Luck bandmate, Bobby Lee. We arrived at the Lee house on schedule, where we met Bob's children and mom. With some time to kill before the game, Bobby suggested taking a short trip up the road to the Western Pennsylvania Musicians Group (W.P.M.G.) headquarters in West Homestead and seeing their facility. As a member of the organization, Bobby had told us about the W.P.M.G. before, so I was interested in seeing what it was all about.

It was an eye-opening experience.

The Western Pennsylvania Musicians Group is a non-profit service whose objective is to help new musicians get started in a substance-free environment. Many aspiring musicians get frustrated early when they realize the cost of instruments, lessons, accessories, etc. - especially if they are from low-income households or broken homes. The W.P.M.G. funds instruments and lessons to those who need them, and their facility in West Homestead provides practice rooms for musicians and bands to get their start. And since the facility is alcohol- and drug-free, it enables musicians to get started on the right foot as well.

Upon arriving at the W.P.M.G. facility, Bobby introduced us to the group's founder, Ralph Moffat. Ralph proceeded to explain the W.P.M.G. to us, and take us on a tour of the facility.

Some 30 bands presently call the W.P.M.G. home. Most are young bands made up of kids or college students; a few are made up of older musicians looking for their start as well. Each has a practice room; some rooms are shared between bands. Each room has heat and air conditioning, and each is equipped with various amps and musical gear, donated to the W.P.M.G. by area musicians. Bands can rent the practice rooms for an affordable \$25/month.

Ralph showed us the main gig room, complete with sound booth, where member bands can stage all-age shows several times a month. The facility also has a small 4-track recording studio, where bands can learn small-scale recording and produce tapes and demos. Bands and musicians can learn to play instruments, run sound, record and promote themselves and their shows - in essence, the basic skills needed to earn a living making music. Some musicians and groups that began here have gone on to record their own CD's, and graduate to playing the Pittsburgh club scene.

Ralph went on to explain that the W.P.M.G. had found a more important mission than music as it became established. It can turn lives around. Ralph cited several cases of musicians who entered the program from broken homes and less-than-ideal home environments; and found solace and hope of a future beyond their troubled day-to-day lives. In other cases, because the W.P.M.G. is substance-free, a few

member musicians actually gave up drugs and alcohol through their involvement here, and were able to turn their lives around. Ralph is able to counsel musicians and help them along to a brighter and more hopeful future. Ralph said he is giving back to the community through the W.P.M.G. The W.P.M.G. makes a difference.

In closing our tour, Ralph told us that the W.P.M.G.'s immediate goals are to pay off the current facility (which they presently lease), and to gain official status as a " nonprofit organization, " which would make them eligible to receive funding from agencies such as the United Way. And in time, if the W.P.M.G. can continue to be successful, Ralph would like to set up W.P.M.G. branches in other cities, to help aspiring musicians statewide to get started on the right foot.

(Check out the ad for the W.P.M.G. in the print issue - you can send donations to the W.P.M.G., 1030 Forest Ave., West Homestead, PA 15120. For more information, call [412] 462-0424.)

After leaving the W.P.M.G. facility, we encountered the largest Harley poker run any of us had ever witnessed - apparently sponsored by a local Pittsburgh Harley dealer, we waited and watched as a seemingly endless parade of AT LEAST 1,000 Harleys proceeded along, accompanied by periodic police escort. As we were waiting under a highway overpass, the thunder from the mass of Harley engines was incredible! Yet another special thing I will remember this day for...

We then parked at Station Square and boarded the Gateway Clipper riverboat shuttle to head to Three Rivers Stadium for the Steeler game. (Riding the Clipper was another first for me this day).

The game sucked. The Steelers lost, 17-3. The epitome of the day was Steeler QB Kordell Stewart getting sacked in his own end zone for two safeties late in the game. The Steelers this day (and as it turns out, this season) in a word - pathetic.

While the game itself sucked, the game experience was a good time. There's nothing quite like the experience of sitting up in the third level of Three Rivers Stadium with a bunch of molared black-and-gold-clad fans! Highlight was when a drunken blue-and-black-clad Jacksonville fan passed out in his seat several rows down, and Steeler fans heaped abuse thick and heavy upon him - especially the guy with the Santa suit and " Bus " helmet on - it was classic! (Thanks again Coconuts Jim for treating me to this game!)

After experiencing riverboat gridlock and eventually returning to the Coconuts Jim-mobile after the game, we headed back to Bobby Lee's place, where his mom had cooked up a DELICIOUS dinner for us (THANK YOU!). We were joined by Pot Luck drummer Mickey Luckenbaugh and his entourage, and after the dinner, it was off to the Civic Arena - and the concert!

Once inside the Arena, we met up with the Beer God and his minion, and eventually located our seats on the floor area, roughly two-thirds of the way back from the stage. (Thanks to my employers, B & F Enterprises, for the tickets!)

Soon the opening act, the Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies, took to the stage. Having seen the Wheelies twice before, I knew this band could kick some butt onstage! But opening for two legendary acts like ZZ Top and Skynyrd, it was likely Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies were not going to be onstage for very long.

And they weren't. Only about twenty minutes or so. The Wheelies opened with a tasty hard-edged funk version of Dr. John's " Right Place Wrong Time. " Singer Mike Farris then greeted the audience, commenting that the Wheelies were " proud to open for two legends. " The group then did one of its best-known tunes to date, " Shakin' the Blues, " before finishing up their set with two newer Southern boogie numbers. It wasn't much, but the Wheelies' set was well-received by the nearly packed house, even though the group was done no favors by the guys at the sound board.

After about a half-hour intermission, it was Skynyrd's turn. With the group having

just released their new Edge of Forever CD and their already huge following in western PA, I was a bit puzzled that they didn't try to bring this tour to Coca Cola Star Lake Amphitheater and take advantage of an early fall outdoor date. But regardless, the Civic Arena quickly had filled during the intermission, and the house was ready to go as Lynyrd Skynyrd opened with the title track to Edge of Forever. Instantly you could tell Skynyrd was happy to be back in Pittsburgh, as Johnny Van Zant strode the stage with a constant smile on his face, and thanked the crowd constantly during the course of the group's set. After the classics "What's Your Name " and "That Smell, " Skynyrd broke out another new song, the second single from the album, "Preacher Man. " Partly due to time constrictions and partly to do something different, Lynyrd Skynyrd then gave the crowd a medley of tunes, with Johnny challenging the crowd to pick out the various songs. Skynyrd then fused together "Down South Jukin,' " "T-R-O-U-B-L-E, " "Whiskey Rock and Roller, " "Swamp Music, " and "The Ballad of Curtis Lowe. " From there, the first single from Edge of Forever, "Workin,' " followed by "Gimme Three Steps, " an extended version of "Call Me The Breeze " with some heated guitar solowork, and "Sweet Home Alabama " to bring the set to a close. It was almost a foregone conclusion that an encore was forthcoming, so after the formality of letting the crowd scream their insides out for a few moments, Lynyrd Skynyrd returned to perform one song for their encore - need I say it? "FREE BIRD! " As many times as I have had this song drummed into my head over the years, it is still refreshing to see Skynyrd do it live, and actually see the sweat being poured into that homestretch guitar jam.

Skynyrd did an impressive job. Not only was the band happy to be back in Pittsburgh, but I sensed they were also happy and proud just to be up there and doing it. There was enthusiasm and confidence present as Skynyrd did the legendary songs, celebrating both the group's own survival and the tradition and memories of its heralded past. And as the Edge of Forever album proves, the current Lynyrd Skynyrd is blazing its own trail and legacy, staying true to their roots but adding their own voice to the legend. Skynyrd's set this night was a celebration of the group's legend, yes, but it also signified that they are not done yet, and they are forging their path in the here and now as well.

The night's second intermission was highlighted by the customary beach balls bouncing throughout the stands of the Arena, and also by what appeared to be a raucous fistfight in the back bleachers of the Arena, well behind where we were sitting. With the demographic attending this show, it likely had to do with somebody insulting somebody else's pickup truck.

Eventually it was ZZ Top's turn. Having never seen ZZ Top before, but having heard lots of good accounts of the group live, I was looking forward to seeing them. Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard emerged onstage, and opened with "Got Me Under Pressure, " which commenced a set of ZZ favorites. The trio proceeded with "Waiting for the Bus/Jesus Just Left Chicago, " "I'm Bad I'm Nationwide " and "Pincushion; " before introducing two blues songs that included some extended soloing from the group. We the heard the recent hit "Bang Bang, " followed by "Cheap Sunglasses, "Just Got Paid; " and an Eliminator trio - "Gimme All Your Lovin, " "Sharp Dressed Man " and "Legs " to end the preliminary set.

The Civic Arena went predictably nuts, and after a few minutes, ZZ Top returned to give the Pittsburgh crowd three more - "Tube Snake Boogie, " "La Grange " and "Tush. "

For the most part, I was impressed with ZZ Top. Their musical ability and onstage presence is still solid, as they impressed with their tightness and solo exhibitions during the set. ZZ Top knew what the Pittsburgh crowd was there for - hits and Texas blues - and they delivered both.

On the down side, I think age is catching up with them, at least physically

onstage. There wasn't a lot of movement or mobility, at least not as much as with Skynyrd's set earlier. And with that, not a lot of spontaneity. ZZ Top did the hits, but didn't do any major improvising on those hits. There were no surprises, good or bad. ZZ Top just came out and did the songs. And there wasn't any elaborate stage show, just the band, the lights and the sound. In all, I guess it was pretty much what I had expected.

So after weathering the backed-up Civic Arena crowd leaving the venue (I can understand why the Penguins want a new arena), we were eventually 'Toona-bound after a fun day in the 'Burgh. Sometimes special days just come together, and that is what made this one day that will stand out in my mind for some time to come.

Three guys are waiting to get into heaven. Peter asks the first man, " How much money did you make? " The man responds, " \$250,000. " " Really, what did you do to make that kind of money? " " I was a lawyer " the man answers. " Very well, you can come in... " Peter asks the second man the same question. " I made \$279,000 last year, " he says. " And what did you do to make that money? " asks Peter. " I was a doctor. " " You did well...come on in! " Finally, Peter reaches the third man and asks the question again. The man proudly states, " I made \$17,500 last year! " " Really, " Peter responds, " and what were the call letters? "

FROM BENEATH THE BAR

Gigging and Swigging with D'Scribe (unless otherwise noted)

SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS @ CROWBAR, STATE COLLEGE 9/29/99

" Baby, will you eat that there snack cracker in your special outfit for me, please?"

Those words will etch Southern Culture On The Skids forever into the rock music history books as one of the most recognizable song openings ever. Yes, that question triggers S.C.O.T.S.' 1996 mega-hit, " Camel Walk. " If the group never again scores a major hit single, that tune alone will live in infamy as Southern Culture On The Skids' defining moment.

But anyone who has delved beyond the hit and has actually checked out S.C.O.T.S.' discography will discover that this band, over the years, has forged their own unique slant, direction and gimmick in the rock music world. North Carolinian singer/guitarist Rick Miller, bassist/singer Mary Huff and drummer Dave Hartman actually came up with the name Southern Culture On The Skids while riding around down South with the radio on one day. As the story has it, a song from R.E.M. came on the radio, after which the deejay identified R.E.M., and labelled them " the new sound of the South. " To which Rick responded that if THAT was the sound of the new South, they preferred the old South, and that " Southern culture was on the skids. " The phrase stuck. The group developed their brand of Southern-styled rockabilly and surf rock with a slight punk demeanor and attitude, and conjured up a visual presence laden with Southern redneck stereotypes and images...Rick and Dave, clad in muscle-shirts, derby hats and Keds sneakers; Mary decked out in enormous beehive hairdos and " Mel's Diner " attire. And then the music - songs about cars, trailers and trailer trash, guns, fried chicken and other craziness.

Anyway, this whole cavalcade was visiting Crowbar in State College this night,

and having heard eyewitness accounts of the live S.C.O.T.S. show beforehand, I knew I had to check it out. Due to working late from my day job and a slight delay at the door, I missed the opening act this night, Stone Poets. But after entering Crowbar, surviving a close encounter with fellow Cut staffer Al Slavicky, and obtaining a cold bottle of brewski, I ventured to the floor area of Crowbar and joined friends Big Jim and Vince Frank, already positioned at stagefront.

It didn't take long before Southern Culture On The Skids, one by one, hit the stage to commence their set. First out was the newest addition to the band, keyboard man "Cousin Chris-py." I had read beforehand that this group was known to toss fried chicken out to their audiences, and Big Jim, a veteran of S.C.O.T.S. shows, instantly yelled up to the group, "We're Hungry!" The band quickly kicked into gear with the uptempo rockabilly "Shotgun," followed by "Daddy Was a Preacher but Maria Was a Go Go Girl." After "Greenback Fly" and an instrumental, frontman/guitarist Rick Miller noted that bassist Mary Huff was "heating up nicely" to the approval of the Crowbar crowd, and Mary then sang Patsy Cline-ish lead vocals on "Nitty Gritty." This was followed by another track from the Dirt Track Date CD, "Whole Lotta Things." From the new album, Plastic Seat Sweat, Southern Culture on the Skids played one of their menu item songs, "Banana Puddin.'" Back to Dirt Track Date for "Firefly" and "Soul City," before S.C.O.T.S. dipped back to their For Lovers Only album for "King Of The Mountain." Rick Miller then bestowed attention upon the group's new keyboard player, Cousin Chris-py, before the group did "White Trash" and "My House Has Wheels" from their Ditch Diggin' CD. After "Voodoo Cadillac," another menu favorite from Ditch Diggin', "Too Much Pork for Just One Fork." Mary sang "House of Bamboo" from the new Plastic Seat Sweat disc, before Rick and Cousin Chris-py recruited several ladies from the audience to get up on stage and - from the new album - "Dance For Me." After the ladies finished dancing with the band, Cousin Chris-py had another task for them to perform...It was dinner time! He broke out a bucket of the Colonel's Extra Crispy, and delegated the ladies to distribute the various fried chicken pieces out to the audience as the band began performing "Eight Piece Box" from their early EP Peckin' Party. The enthusiastic Crowbar crowd feasted on the chicken during the course of the tune, and a few pieces returned airborne to the stage. One piece wedged itself beneath some strings near the bridge of Rick Miller's guitar. Rick continued to play the axe, chicken piece and all, through the rest of the set. After the chicken treat, S.C.O.T.S. gave the crowd the other highlight everyone had been waiting for - the hit "Camel Walk." The group then brought their set to a close with the gospel-like anthem "The Great Atomic Power." The crowd by this point was nuts, with even a small amount of moshing going on. As the band exited the stage, Rick Miller shook hands with Big Jim, leaving a guitar pick in Jim's hand before exiting.

With the crowd as loud and enthusiastic as they were, you knew an encore was on the way. So after several moments for the band to catch their breath, Southern Culture On The Skids returned to the stage, and started the encore with the title track to Dirt Track Date. After another song, the group finished the first encore with "Love-A-Rama" from the new Plastic Seat Sweat disc.

The crowd still wanted more, so Southern Culture on the Skids returned to the stage again, this time finishing the night with a ten-minute surf/rockabilly instrumental jam.

This was an awesome show! Even for me not being all that familiar with Southern Culture on the Skids beyond the Dirt Track Date album, I thoroughly enjoyed this group's down-homey brand of onstage Southern hospitality, combined with energy, drive and enthusiasm. Musically this band is excellent at what they do, and if you watch their musicianship, all four band members are solid players. Rick was demonstrating hot guitarwork throughout the set, and new addition Cousin

Crispy fit in perfectly on keys, with timely fills and accompaniment.

And as the show itself went, S.C.O.T.S. kept it nonstop fun from beginning to end. Not only are these four band members musicians, but they were friendly personalities as well - making it easier for the Crowbar crowd to rally behind this band and what they did. It almost felt like you already knew these people - they were like the neighbors from up the street or up the mountain, or the folks who ran that gas station up the block with the beat-up stock car sitting 'round back.

In a way, in this musical day and age, Southern Culture on the Skids are unlikely anti-heroes. Their rural Southern redneck persona and rootsy rockabilly/surf-rock are refreshing departures from the current alterna/rage/grunge/gloom and doom scene. And instead of dark emotions, anger, self-doubt and socio-political lyricism, Southern Culture plays up the white trash image for all it's worth, singing of trailers, cheap food, farming, race cars and the simple life. The Crowbar audience rallied around it this night, and this writer became a fan this night as well. I highly recommend checking out Southern Culture On The Skids should they make their way back to these parts again. If you don't get "Camel Walk " or the hype about what this group was about a few summers ago, the live show will convince you. It convinced me, and I will be back for more.

TYPE O NEGATIVE/PUYA @ CROWBAR, STATE COLLEGE 11/3/99

I vividly remember the last time Type O Negative played Crowbar nearly two years ago...It was a frigid January night; I remember waiting nearly an hour-and-a-half in line outside to get in. I remember several Altoona rock fans who were injured in an auto accident trying to get there, eventually showing up in casts and bandages just in time to see Type O. And I remember riding back home on snow-covered highways, as snow began falling during the show.

Fortunately, weatherwise there would be no repeat performance of the cold and snowfall. It was early November and mid autumn, and pretty much a seasonal night in central PA. Type O Negative had a new album, *World Coming Down*, and I was anxious to check out what was new in Type O's shadowy, dark world.

Travelling solo this night, I entered the jam-packed Crowbar in time to catch the last 3 songs from opening band Puya. I had missed this band during their OzzFest stint earlier this year, but had heard some impressive reviews about them. From Puerto Rico, Puya mixes Latin beats and rhythms into their brand of heavy rap-styled metal. Three songs didn't give me anywhere near a complete idea what Puya was about, but what I heard sounded competent and impressive, and the Crowbar crowd responded favorably to them as well.

I spent much of the intermission jockeying to find a good vantage position in the crowded Crowbar. For the time being, I found a spot in the lower front section of the upstairs over-21 level.

Soon after, Type O Negative took the stage, and Lurch-voiced lead singer Peter Steele greeted the Crowbar crowd, saying, "We suck! F#\$k you! You suck! We GET PAID to suck! " Then the group went into a Pink Floyd "In The Flesh "-type intro, which led into "White Slavery " from the new album (which at this point I hadn't yet heard and was largely NOT familiar with). After a second tune, Type O charged into a fast-paced take on Creedence's "Bad Moon Rising, " before dipping into the October Rust CD for "In Praise of Bacchus. " Leading into another song off the new *World Coming Down* CD, Peter Steele remarked that he used to believe in people committing suicide, but changed his mind, advising the crowd they should "live to irritate the people that hate you. " Following this song, the group teased a Black Sabbath riff that eventually evolved into "Christian Woman. "

At about this point, I decided to try to better my vantage point, so I relocated to the under 21 stagefront area in hopes of maneuvering up near the stage. I actually

was closer and could see better, but couldn't advance any further than the rear of the stagefront area due to the tightly-packed crowd and the fervent moshing taking place near the middle of that crowd.

Type O Negative again began playing with Black Sabbath riffs, and this time played a Sabbath song all the way through, "Children of the Grave. " Addressing demands from stagefront, Peter Steele told the crowd the band wasn't doing "Black No. 1 " this night. After another song from the new album, Type O Negative did their version of Neil Young's "Cinnamon Girl, " before going through several more songs from the new album. Then, teasing the beginning of Led Zeppelin's "No Quarter, " Type O performed "Everything Dies " from the new album, before ending the night with... "Black No. 1. "

Type O Negative didn't disappoint, delivering the unique show I expected - their funeral dirge-flavored brand of heavy gothic metallic rock, done tongue-in-cheek. The towering Peter Steele sang with his deep, Lurch-like baritone voice, sounding doomy and gloomy, yet with witty commentary between songs to convince the Crowbar crowd he wasn't about to do himself in onstage. Guitarist Kenny Hickey's funereal buzzsaw chords and Josh Silver's eerie keyboard flavorings set the somber backdrop onstage, just as on the group's albums. The group varied the song material between faster and slower moments, and newer and older material, so those (like me) unfamiliar with the material on the new album wouldn't be lost for too long. Type O Negative was convincing again this night, enough so that I purchased the World Coming Down CD the very next day.

I doubt Type O Negative will ever be considered "mainstream " - their style and sound, in their own way, ride the fringe between metal and gothic. But Type O's unique sound and slant has already won the group its own legion of fans in the world of modern and metal rock - call it a large cult following, if you will. They have done that by doing what they did on the live stage this night - doing what they do well, doing it convincingly, and - for my third time witnessing them live - once again proving to me their strength as a live rock entity.

THE HURRICANES TURKEY NIGHT JAM @ PETER C'S, ALTOONA 11/25/99

Some things in this world are certain...The sun will rise in the east in the morning, and set in the west at night...I eat hot wings at Pellegrine's every Monday night...And that when The Hurricanes are performing on the night of a major holiday, the resulting jam is going to SMOKE!

Thus was the case this night, the 'Canes' Turkey Night Jam at Peter C's, as music fans and musicians alike showed up to burn off their newly-added turkey poundage and enjoy some hot jams in the process.

The basic Hurricanes trio - guitarist/singer Felix Kos, bassist/singer Jeff Clapper and drummer Bob Watters - set the mood early with favorites like "Start It Up, " "Icy You, " versions of the Allmans' "Jessica, " Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Couldn't Stand the Weather, " Jimi Hendrix' "The Wind Cries Mary " and more.

At this point, former Lodge Lizzards singer/guitarist Eric Kelly plugged in and joined Felix, while drummer Mark Panek replaced Bob behind the kit. After doing the song "Hot Dog, " Randy Ketner replaced Jeff on bass, and Felix stepped away. We had a totally different band onstage - it was the first appearance of Eric's new band, Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys.

As their first public appearance together, Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys only did a few songs -the Stones' "Brown Sugar, " Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Pride and Joy, " one of Eric's favorites - "Chocolate Covered Crème Filled Cookie Blues, " and a Chris Isaac song. Overall, this new trio sounded promising, with Eric's full-throttled bluesy growl and guitar prowess at front and center, and Mark busily supplying the beat behind him. Randy, for his first time playing bass onstage since his Tommi-Gunn

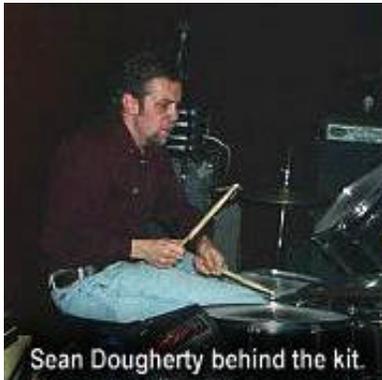
stint some eight years ago, did a respectable job, after shaking some nerves early. Though only a rough barometer, what Fat Vinny & the Wiseguys showed this night was promising, and given time, should develop into an interesting band entity on the Altoona area scene.

Felix and the Hurricanes retook the stage for a few more favorites from ZZ Top, the Allman Bros., The Doors, Fleetwood Mac and Rick Derringer. Then more guests joined the group onstage - Lone Wolf frontman/harmonica player John Stevens and Ride drummer Terry Wilt. This combination did "Stormy Monday " and "Tore Down, " before Ozone Rangers (and former Hurricanes) bassist Bill Nusom relieved Jeff onstage for the Allman Bros.' "Blue Skys. " Stix and Stones and Stems and Seeds guitarist/frontman Rick Ramsey plugged in his guitar and started jamming with Felix midway through the song. Rick, Bob and Billy remained onstage for Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here " and the Doors' "Roadhouse Blues. " A line-up of Eric, Mark and Jeff then did a funk number, and Felix rejoined the proceedings for Marshall Tucker's "Can't You See " and Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama. "

At this point, there was a brief intermission, so all the players could cool down their hands and instruments from all the heated jamming. Soon the Hurricanes plus the Penetrators' "Big " Jim Ricotta jammed on Skynyrd's "Gimme Three Steps, " before the basic Hurricanes trio of Felix, Bob and Jeff did Lynyrd Skynyrd's "The Ballad of Curtis Lowe, " complete with the song-ending segueway into "The Saints Come Marching In. "

The night now into the homestretch run, things steadily became more exciting. With the Beer God and his minion there to cheer him on, Sean Dougherty was welcomed behind the drum kit, where he supplied the beat to the 'Canes' renditions of "Six Days On The Road " and "Wipe Out. " The 'Canes plus John Stevens then did the Allman Brothers' "One Way Out, " and then went country for "Rocky Top, " which brought some wild dancing action to Peter C's dance floor courtesy of Beer God partner in crime Guv'nor Jesse. This was supposed to be the night's finale, as the house lights came up, but John allowed the group to do one more tune - the Outlaws' "Green Grass and High Tides. "

I supposed you had to be there to totally appreciate the fun this night - the Hurricanes draw musical talent from throughout the region, and as expected, this holiday jam night was a melting pot of talent, as various musicians mixed and matched with Felix company to the delight of all the onlookers. The Hurricanes themselves always seem to take their game to the next higher level when musical guests are present onstage, and such was the case tonight. In all, a very fun jam-filled night - something we are becoming accustomed to whenever Felix invites some friends over for the holidays.



BROKEN NECK/TORKE/THE GRIMM @ ALDO'S, ALTOONA 12/10/99

Packed houses on Friday nights, packed houses for original rock, and both scenarios happening simultaneously in Altoona, PA are extreme rarities indeed. But at Aldo's this night, all three virtually impossible scenarios converged, showing this observer that there is still hope for this town's music scene.

Granted, Cucuplex and Jack Daddy are already two of this town's top draws at the moment, so when members from both bands collaborated on a new original metal project, Broken Neck, I knew it was going to draw some interest and crowd. Still, it was refreshing to see the good-sized crowd that showed up to check out and support not just Broken Neck, but the two opening bands this night, The Grimm and Torke.

I arrived shortly after The Grimm started their set, and quickly took notice of this band's unique style and sound. The Grimm was playing modern-styled aggressive metal, and tempering it with a progressive rock sensibility reminiscent of Yes. Three members of this band - singer Bobby Lee (not to be confused with the Pot Luck/Penetrators frontman), guitarist Kirk Tonkin and bassist Kent Tonkin - previously performed together a few years back in the unheralded rock band Mister Yukk. Now teaming with drummer Ron Brode - himself experienced in progressive-styled original rock from his days with the band Of Sound Mind - this band was clearly on the same page. I caught several song titles from The Grimm's all-original set - "Unreal " and "Sunny Day, " which nicely balanced modern, metal and progressive rock; and "Ramblin' Crazy Fool " and "Raise The Line, " which leaned more aggressive and metallic. Bobby displayed a solid voice, capable of both range

and explosive agitation; set against an instrumental backdrop with changing keys and rhythms. The assembling crowd seemed to appreciate The Grimm's set, and the group impressively left their mark this night. The Grimm expect to issue a debut CD early next year, and will be playing at Peter C's Jan. 8.

After a relatively short intermission, the night's second band, Torke, was ready to go. Based out of the Penn State Altoona Campus vicinity, Torke recently finished third in a battle of the bands at the Campus. I had barely missed seeing their set there, so I wanted to check them out this night. Torke's set was a ragefest from start-to-finish - their sound is agitated, raging punkish metal. Together about two years, lead barker Jay, guitarist Josh, bassist Wayne and drummer Matty drilled intense, original tunes that generally started out calm, but quickly escalated into explosive tirades. Occasionally the group would drop in a movie-related soundbyte, but generally Torke's set constantly moved forward, keeping a handful of devout stagefront moshers happy.

Of course, the band most of the crowd present at Aldo's this night had come to see was Broken Neck. This collaboration of Cucuplex and Jack Daddy talent had recently finished work on their debut CD, and they had diligently promoted this night's live debut - adding that this would be their only area appearance for a while. Though I had already seen a photo of the group and had listened to their self-titled CD at least once, I was still intrigued by Broken Neck's presentation. All five members stormed the stage, adorning face/body paints and varying hair colors, and slammed into their set of original tunes from their CD. Having only heard the CD once all the way through at this point, I was not certain of the exact song order as these tunes were fired off, but did recognize the disc's opening track, " Here It Is, " as the song the group opened with on this night. Broken Neck's delivery was explosive, all-out aggression, as these painted warriors took no prisoners. As drummer Josh Anspach slammed out a monstrous beat, guitarists Phil Wagner and Bill Rickard and bassist Dan Martino attacked their instruments and charged the stagefront, snarling and scowling with intensity. Vocalist Scott Russell bellowed bestial carnage as he vented a litany of anger and rage. The stagefront Aldo's crowd quickly responded with a constant barrage of headbanging and moshing that lasted the entire set. Definitely Broken Neck's aggressive modern metal sound had found receptive fans here at Aldo's, and their onstage debut was a resounding success.

As was this whole night. As several people repeated through the course of the evening, it was refreshing to see folks supporting original live music. Let's hope that this trend continues, and that future original rock showcases like this one are greeted by enthusiastic crowds.

WHISKEY HIGH/PETEY GETS AROUND @ ALDO'S, ALTOONA 12/11/99

Having been soundly throttled by the metal triple-bill just reviewed, I decided to make a weekend of it and go back for more at Aldo's the following night, as two of Western PA's best heavy-hitters, Whiskey High and Petey Gets Around, were in the town.

It had been over a year since I last witnessed Petey Gets Around. At that point, the group was still working in their bass player at the time, J.T., and were converting to a heavier and more aggressive sound. I had checked out a new Petey original, " Worm, " on MP3, and it was definitely a heavier departure from anything on the group's debut disc, Along For The Ride. And at a recent Whiskey High show at Dougherty's " Terra " Tory in Johnstown, High frontman " Woody " beckoned for Petey frontlady Miss Ruschelle to come up and sing a song with them (she had already left Dougherty's at the time, so we didn't get to see that pairing). If Whiskey High is inviting Ruschelle to sing with them, Petey must have gotten around to sounding a lot heavier!

I entered Aldo's during the early stages of Petey's set, and promptly discovered that bass player J.T. was ghost from their roster, and that a familiar face had replaced him...veteran local bottom-end player Stu Metzler, whose local band resume includes stints with Bonfire, XL and several other bands. And as Petey proceeded with their set, their sound still remained heavy. Miss Ruschelle was in the midst of singing Monster Magnet's " Space Lord " as I procured my first foamy adult beverage of the night and jockeyed for a seat near Aldo's stagefront. Next up, Ruschelle and the rest of Petey - new bassist Stu, guitarist Lou Lombardi and drummer David Learn - tried their hand at Ozzy, doing a decent job on " No More Tears. " Petey then threw a fit of Rage, with Ruschelle venting on " Killing In The Name; " followed by a new original tune, " Try So Hard. " Miss Ruschelle paused briefly to alert the Juniata crowd that they were "burying the dog " effective New Years Eve - they were changing their handle, dropping Petey Gets Around in favor of Love in Ruins. The group then stepped up the intensity with Pantera's " Walk, " went classic for Led Zeppelin's " Whole Lotta Love, " and gave a weighty interpretation of Eurythmics' " Sweet Dreams. " Then a bit of a surprise, as Miss Ruschelle began belting out Jackyl's " She Loves My Cock " ...hmmmmmm. The group then finished up with a new original, a ballad called "Lie to You. "

Petey...err...Love In Ruins (I better get used to using the new name NOW) did a decent job. They were still heavier, although not quite as harsh as they sounded with J.T. at the bass helm. Songwise they appeared more consistent and steady, maintaining the heaviness yet holding a classic edge, and emphasizing melody more in the new originals. Performance wise they were on...Miss Ruschelle's voice was in fine form, although I thought she was very slightly undermixed and at times hard to understand through this particular sound system (perhaps the sound engineer needed to bring the high end on the microphone up to accommodate her voice). Lou Lombardi was showing some lethal moves on the guitar, his crisp solowork nicely complementing Ruschelle's vocals. New man Stu was solid on bass, and David Learn's drums were thunderous. Petey...err...Love In Ruins appeared to be in good form as the new year...and new identity...approached.

After a brief intermission, during which several more observers arrived, Whiskey High was set to go. The first of their two sets concentrated on cover material representative of their current heavier direction - tunes from Rob Zombie, Korn, Coal Chamber, Pantera, Sevendust, Nine Inch Nails, Godsmack, Tool, Filter and more. Field general Scott "Woody " Boyd rallied the crowd around the sound, getting at least a few onlookers up on the dance floor to bang their heads.

Whiskey High's second set was what I was waiting for - their concert set featuring all original tunes, including several new. The group opened with three of the heavier numbers from their 1995 debut, One Hundred Percent Pure - "Blackness, " "Anxiety " and "Sick and Tired. " We then heard the newer "Real Life " from their 1997 EP, "It's All Right " and several new originals, likely to appear on the group's forthcoming new studio set due out in early 2000. Crowd favorite "Axeslayer " featured the patented Mike Palone axe solo display, before Whiskey High continued with their anthemic stomp "Time " and their ode to wrongful incarceration, "Busted, " to end the night.

Whiskey High is still Whiskey High. Scott Boyd still displays one commanding set of pipes onstage, as he roars his lead vocals with the ferocity of a caged lion. He has power, range and rage, and pours it all out, no holds barred. Axe Mike Palone these days has developed a more savage roar to his guitar to accommodate the heavier direction of Whiskey High; his chords are more towering and heavy, and his solowork likewise is rawer and more aggressive. Bassist Mike Ekis and drummer Rich Palone underline Mike and Scott with a menacing and thunderous cacophony of barraging, go-for-broke rhythms that take no prisoners. Definitely judging by these sets, don't

be expecting any kinder or gentler Whiskey High in the new century.

The group closed out the year by releasing a new live album of old material, Live 92 (see review elsewhere in this issue). According to Mike Palone, a new studio album should hit the streets early in the new year. He said that it could take the form of a double-disc studio set, or perhaps two separate albums - a studio album and a live album. Whichever form it takes, the new album(s) when it arrives should be heavy, as Whiskey High embraces metal's current age of ferocity and rage.

For this night, both Whiskey High and Love In Ruins made strong statements as to why they are both bands to be watched for in 2000, and why we here at the Cut will need to keep an eye on each.

TOYS FOR TOTS BENEFIT CONCERT @ THE RUSTY NAIL, HARRISBURG 12/12/99

I know what you may be asking - what is a 'Toona guy like me doing driving to Harrisburg for a show like this?

The answer is several-fold...Part of it was being able to hook up with some friends down Harrisburg way, fellow PA Musician writer/show organizer Shel Hoachlander and the family band HaleStorm. Part of it was the lure of seeing several bands and performers I had never seen before. Part of it was my periodic urge to "get out of Dodge " for a day. Part of it was the alternative - staying home in Altoona, watching the Steelers lose on the tube again and getting depressed about it. And the biggest part of it was that it was a special event for a good cause, and I wanted to be a part of it, representing Q94, PA Musician and the Cut.

Before I go on, hats off to Shel for organizing this benefit show in such a short period of time (she put it together in just 4 weeks); also to Aaron Zimmerman and Sonic Productions for running sound and lights, Rogue Stork Entertainment for assisting in planning this show, the U.S. Marines and Toys for Tots, the Rusty Nail and its staff, and everyone who attended and supported the cause through the course of the day.

My initial game plan was to arrive at the Nail by 1:30 PM in time to catch Balistic's set. But underestimating transit time from Altoona, in addition to Christmas-related traffic slowdowns in Lewistown and outside Harrisburg, didn't enable me to arrive until around 2:30, after Balistic had finished. So on the bad side, I missed their performance, which included frontman Dave Fox's four-part series of tunes dedicated to his father. But on the good side, I noted that Dave was off his crutches and back on his feet after a serious injury suffered in a motorcycle accident earlier this year.

After being nearly gang-tackled at the door by the Halestorm contingent and Shel (just kidding), I took a seat at a table in front of the stage, and by recommendation of Shel's boyfriend, Troy Logan, promptly ordered a dozen Rusty Nail hot wings (I tried them before during the Millennium Music Conference earlier this year; they kick butt!), and prepared to witness my first band of the afternoon, Hired Guns.

Hired Guns shouldn't be a necessarily new name to our neck of the woods - they are already currently one of the top-drawing bands at area live country music nightspot the Last Cowboy in State College. (In fact, they are one of very few bands that venue actually books for an entire weekend.) So I assumed that they would be good, and as Gina Rockey from local classic rock station The Eagle 92.7 introduced them, I was curious to see what the hoopla about Hired Guns was about.

As they started, I quickly realized what the hoopla was about - Hired Guns play a hard-driving hybrid mix of country and rock, fronted by the full-bodied vocals of lead singer/acoustic guitarist Rick Mohn. I didn't catch the title of the first song they did, but their lead guitar player, Mike Morrison, broke a string and left guitar guts on the

stage - definitely these guys had energy and intensity going for them! Singer Rick, stalling for time for Mike to fix his afflicted axe, broke out a Merle Haggard number, "Sing Me Back Home. " Once the guitar and band were back to full strength, Rick introduced a song off Hired Guns' first CD, a remake of Elvis Costello's "Pump It Up. " This version was good, blending the song's punky demeanor with a countryish stomp persona - it worked! The group did a new song from their forthcoming new album, before introducing an ode to a narcissistic 'God's gift to women,' "I Think She's A Man, " and another original song, "Ladies Night, " which included some talkbox work from Mike. The Guns did two more originals, "The Whiskey Prophet " and "Don't You Love It, " before ending their set with two well-executed classic rock remakes, Steve Miller's "The Joker " and Aerosmith's "Sweet Emotion. " I was impressed with my first look at Hired Guns. Singer Rick had a strong voice and onstage personality, and he and the band were solid and energetic players. The original songs were catchy, and rode the middle ground between rock and country nicely. Hired Guns impressed me enough that I will likely make the roadtrip to State College sometime soon to check them out at the Last Cowboy.

One big positive about this benefit show was that everything seemed to move right along, and except for one period when a drum kit was being changed over, there were no long lulls between entertainers. Within minutes of Hired Guns finishing their set, an acoustic performer took the stage, Jim Stout. Jim - lead singer for Luvkit, who would perform later - played four songs while Halestorm readied their gear onstage behind him. Jim mixed two original songs with " unplugged " versions of Creed's " What's This Life For " and Matchbox 20's " 3 AM. "

Halestorm completed setting up their equipment, and soon, Gina Rockey and Carol Seidel from local classic rock station The Eagle 92.7 stepped to the microphone, welcomed everybody to the benefit, and introduced the band.

Halestorm's performance, in a phrase - OUTTA CONTROL!!! I've reported this family rock band's exploits in past Cut reviews - Halestorm's prior performances tended toward lighter and upbeat keyboard-driven pop-rock. That was then. Then came Leo. 16-year-old guitarist Leo Nessinger, that is. This was my first time seeing Halestorm with Leo in an actual onstage performance. And Leo has enabled Halestorm to step up their presentation by leaps and bounds. They are now a serious bonafide ROCK band with a guitar edge! The new Halestorm sound is harder-edged and more aggressive - yet doesn't compromise the talents and charm of the band's key components, singer/keyboardist Liz Hale and young drummer Arejay Hale. The fact that Halestorm has undergone a complete metamorphosis was evidenced by the fact that their whole set was comprised of new original songs, and featured none of the tunes from their pre-Leo debut CD, Don't Mess With The Time Man. Halestorm opened with " Holding On To The Storm " and " Invisible Reality, " and almost immediately Leo's impact with the group was felt, as he added both guitar crunch and solo fireworks to fatten up the 'Stormers' sound. Liz Hale then introduced a new keyboard ballad, " Over Me, " before letting her younger brother, Arejay, take the spotlight with his own drum solo, entitled " No Kidding " (a reference to his young age). With the Rusty Nail crowd looking on in awe, Halestorm picked up the pace with another new track, " Scream, " before Liz introduced the set's biggest highlight, their version of " Oh Holy Night. " This version of the song started out mellow, but quickly and explosively escalated into a full-out rocker, with the entire Halestorm roster going full-tilt! Liz's powerful high-range voice, Leo's scorching guitar leads, Arejay's torrid beats, and dad Roger's rumbling bass combined to bring the Rusty Nail to its knees, and the place totally erupted as this Christmas carol ended! But before the Rusty Nail could catch their breath, Halestorm was into their final song of the set, " Emotional Release, " another uptempo rocker with Liz and Leo again pushing it to the edge. The atmosphere was charged and magical as Halestorm

finished their set and the crowd again exploded with applause. It was obvious by this set that with the addition of Leo Nessinger, Halestorm has taken their sound and presentation to the next level, and with a new album coming out in March, Y2K is already looking to be a huge year for Halestorm.

As the dust settled from Halestorm, and as the next band, Spellbound, set up, we were treated to another acoustic performer, Darcie Miner. I had heard some impressive things about this singer, who like two members of the Halestorm contingent just before her, is only 16 years of age. Darcie's style suggests contemporaries like Tori Amos and Jewel, and like those two, Darcie is capable of running the emotional gamut from soft to intense, laid-back to frantic in a short period of time. She also displayed nice strumming ability on her acoustic as she played five songs for the Rusty Nail crowd. The first four songs appeared to be original compositions, before Darcie closed her brief set with a nice version of Fleetwood Mac's "Big Love."

After a relatively short wait, Gina Rockey and Carol Seidel from The Eagle 92.7 again took the stage and introduced Spellbound. I've seen this band several times this year, first at this same venue during the Millennium Music Conference back in February, and several times in Altoona before empty rooms at new Sebastiano's. Spellbound underwent a roster

change since the last time I saw them, with Ian Blair taking over bass duties. Ian seemed to fit in perfectly with the Spellbound, and the group didn't appear to miss a beat as they played their nearly 30-minute set of melodic crunch rock originals. Highlights included Spellbound's best original tunes, such as "Road to Nowhere," "Pick Up the Pieces," "Little Angel," and "My Imagination;" plus energetic versions of Tonic's "Open Up Your Eyes" and Queen's "Tie Your Mother Down," which ended the set. Spellbound's forte remains catchy, hard-edged 80's-styled hard rock, anchored by crisp rhythms from Ian and drummer Mike Caldwell, powered forth by Andy Dulack's stinging guitar leads and crunch chords, and topped by the smooth, high-flying vocals of Mark McNelly. Spellbound is a throwback to the era when songs and melodies actually mattered in rock music, and the Rusty Nail crowd was appreciative of that fact, as cheers grew steadily with each passing song. I give Spellbound credit for staying the course with their style and sound, even though this brand of rock isn't the popular flavor of the month with the current MTV generation - melody will again matter in rock someday soon, and these guys are a threat to be near the forefront regionally when that does occur. Look for Spellbound's first CD out early in the new year.

One interesting trend I began to notice as this event proceeded - and a trend that Shel Hoachlander's son, Emmanuel, noticed as well - with the possible exception of Hired Guns' drummer, every drummer onstage thus far was into the spinning drumstick thing behind their respective kit. Arejay Hale was doing it; Mike Caldwell was doing it; and I was starting to pay attention to the other drummers left on the day's bill to see if they were into the stick-twirling thing as well. Yes, I have been doing this too long...

Another changeover of bands brought about the return of Jim Stout to provide between-band entertainment. Jim played a little longer this time, belting out unplugged original tunes such as "Pipedream" and "Take Me Home;" versions of Pearl Jam's "Black," Fuel's "Sunburn" and more.

Before long, the next band was ready to go - The Poptart Monkeys. Thanks to Gina Rockey for allowing me the pleasure of introducing the Monkeys, who were primed and ready to party. Their first time playing at the Rusty Nail, the Poptart Monkeys saw an opportunity to win new fans this day, and let loose with their high-energy set. The Monkeys played modern rock favorites from Lit, Harvey Danger, and Eve 6, plus heavier fare from Godsmack, raunch rock from Buck Cherry, a Cheap

Trick classic, the Beastie Boys' " Fight for Your Right (to Party) " and Quiet Riot's " Metal Health " to close the set. The band was in good form, with Rob Hampton keeping the beat uptempo, and the guitar/bass tandem of Paul Danishefsky, James Balogach and Bill Talanca churning out the chord mayhem thick and heavy. Singer Paul Reddon was constant motion onstage, and demonstrated his raw vocal range and power often. And Monkeys that they are, the group's set contained a little bit of chicanery, as Bill Talanca took the opportunity to duct-tape Paul to his microphone stand towards set's end. The Rusty Nail's cheers grew louder as the Poptart Monkey's set progressed, and by the time all was said and done, the group had clearly won some new fans. And a good time was had by all.

And yes, Rob Hampton was doing the stick-twirling thing behind the drum kit. I think we were onto something here...

At this point, several of the U.S. Marines present stepped onstage and gave away the many door prizes collected for this special show. I had five tickets, but not one of my numbers came up. But while the Marines were doing their thing, they showed us all a reminder of why we were at the Rusty Nail this day...Sgt. Rick Wilson of the Marines held up young Kailey Smith, reminding us that children, and especially needy children, were what Toys for Tots was about.

The next band was a band I had not seen before, Psycho Candy. Five members strong, Psycho Candy played a half-hour set of current rock favorites from Bush, Greenday, Hole, Seven Mary Three and others, and did a good job. Lead singer Ted Vincent demonstrated a decent voice, and the rest of the band - guitarists Steve Shearer and Jimi Trax, bassist Ron Houck, and drummer Josh Freeburn - were solid behind him. Ted mentioned several times during the band's set that Psycho Candy was happy to be a part of the day's proceedings, and their set was met with appreciative applause. This set was a good sampler of what Psycho Candy was about - hopefully I will get to see this band again sometime.

Up next to perform unplugged between electric bands, another artist I had anticipated seeing for the first time, Dan Kibler. I had heard Dan's album from earlier in the year, Capsule, and was curious to see what this performer was like in the live setting, even if unplugged. Dan had a second guitar player with him onstage (I didn't catch his name), and the pair performed three songs. Two of the songs I believe were original songs, " 500 Miles " and " Shame; " the middle song was a nice adaptation of the 10 C.C. hit " I'm Not In Love; " different enough in its variation that I didn't readily recognize the song until Dan got into the chorus. It wasn't a long set, given the set-up going on behind the duo, but Dan Kibler did a decent job in the time frame given him.

We had already witnessed Jim Stout solo twice this day between bands. Now up next, Jim in his band situation, Luvkit. Featuring former members of Munch, Luvkit played a high-powered set of current rock favorites from Jimmie's Chicken Shack, Brother Cane, Bush, Caroline's Spine, Lenny Kravitz, Godsmack and more. Jim Stout provided solid and powerful voice, and along with lead guitarist Gib Smith generated a muscular guitar presence, while bassist Jack Lauer and drummer Mick Bachman supplied hungry-sounding rhythms. Luvkit's momentum seemed to build with each successive song, and the crowd response became louder along the way as well. It was easy to understand why Luvkit is already a popular draw on the Harrisburg circuit (aside from the band members' past resumes), as this set was pretty impressive and represented the group well; I'll check them out if they ever get up this way.

Once again, it was time for another unplugged artist to perform during the band equipment changeover. And this time it was one of the Harrisburg area's better known musical sons, Jeff Feltenberger of the Badlees. Jeff explained that the rest of the band had other commitments and couldn't do the Toys for Tots benefit as a

group whole, but they believed in the cause enough that they wanted to be represented in the effort, and thus Jeff's presence this night. Jeff did three songs - starting with " One Leather Girl; " following with the song he wrote and sang on the Badlees (Amazing Grace) CD " Appalachian Scream; " and - tapping a personal influence - ending with a version of Steve Earle's " Someday. " Jeff kept it laid back and loose, although with equipment changes happening all around him onstage, it was hard to be serious.

At this point, we were well past supper hour, so I decided to take in some more finger food from the Rusty Nail kitchen, finding the breaded mushrooms and french fries here to be pretty good, too.

Next up electrically was another band I had not witnessed before, Zero Gravity. Though I had not seen Zero Gravity before, I had seen two of their members, guitarist/singer Brian Seneca and drummer/singer Jerry Simpson, in their previous band, Bamboo Igloo. Nowadays, Brian and Jerry jam with singer/guitarist Rich Vandevender, bassist Rick Farrel, and keyboard man Mike Heiss. Zero Gravity mixed it up between modern and classic rock, taking a decisively more classic rock turn as the set progressed. Opening tunes from Godsmack, Creed and Buckcherry gave way to numbers from Queen, Aerosmith, a Led Zeppelin, a late 70's funk/disco diversion, and Lynyrd Skynyrd to end the set. Zero Gravity kept stepping up the energy level as the set progressed, too, working in choreography between Brian and Rich, and attacking the tunes aggressively with energy and enthusiasm. This wasn't lost on the Rusty Nail crowd, as the Rusty Nail's dance floor got its first real workout of the day. Other highlights of Zero Gravity's set included the group's version of Pat Benatar's " Hit Me with Your Best Shot " with guest singer Kristin, and a hyperactive slamming take on " Santa Claus Is Coming to Town. And yes, Jerry Simpson was twirling drumsticks this set, too - I was seriously thinking about calling the Guinness Book of World Record people. Seriously, Zero Gravity too gave a good accounting of themselves this night, and I'll hopefully get to see them perform again sometime soon.

As Zero Gravity and Emily's Toybox were sharing some of the equipment onstage, there wasn't much of an intermission between the two bands - just enough time for Sgt. Rick Wilson of the Marines to step up to the microphone to announce that some 111 toys and over \$500 cash had been raised at the benefit thus far. Sgt. Wilson thanked the crowd and the musicians for taking part in the effort, before surrendering the stage to the day's final act, Emily's Toybox.

Ever the wildman, Toybox lead spokesperson Mike Wise remarked that he was the only person in the house whose hair was shorter than the Marines.' Sgt. Wilson laughed, joking that he felt intimidated standing amongst the longhairs like the guys in Balistic, but that Mike's hair length gave him and the other Marines something to aspire to. With that, Mike, guitarist/singer Frank white and drummer Wade Corbin launched into their set, opening with several new original songs and doing their usual crazed hyjinx in between. After the second song, Mike presented a Christmas stocking, which he passed around the room to collect more money for Toys for Tots. Mike added a little bit of incentive for people to dig into their wallets and pocketbooks, telling the Rusty Nail crowd that the Marines would kick their asses if they didn't give. It worked, as by the time the stocking made its circuit of the room several songs later, and additional \$200 had been collected for Toys for tots. Emily's Toybox continued to do new songs, such as the title tune from their current 3-song EP, Beach, plus new titles like " I'm A Bum, " the comical " Meow Song, " and more. Of course, no Emily's Toybox show would be complete without the crazed array of stage props, Mike Wise " headgear " and other craziness; it was all there in good supply, keeping Rusty Nail patrons and Marines laughing and howling wildly into the night. Another highlight was the Toybox' impromptu Christmas song medley, where

Mike would improvise the lyrics to Christmas titles shouted out from the audience. I think it is a safe bet that you won't hear the Morman Tabernacle Choir rushing to cover the Toybox Christmas medley any time soon. The debauchery concluded with two favorites off Emily's Toybox's first album, I Never Get My Way - " Bionic " (yes, IT still smells like Chapstick, according to the Rusty Nail crowd) and " So F**king Cool. "

And yes, Wade Corbin was twirling his drumsticks. Perhaps I need a vacation.

Thus ended a day of excellent live rock and roll and charity, as Emily's Toybox finished their set just shy of midnight. As the remaining crowd filtered out of the Rusty Nail (Harrisburg seemingly doesn't stay out as late on Sunday nights as Altoona does), various band members, Marines, sound company folks, organizers and other riff raff like myself all posed together for pictures at stagefront. Seriously, this was a feel-good show all the way around...the various bands and artists involved all did fantastic jobs. Hats off to all of them, along with Aaron Zimmerman and the day's production company, Sonic Productions; Rogue Stork Productions; the Rusty Nail and their staff; Sgt. Rick Wilson and the Marines; and especially show organizer Shel Hoachlander, who put this thing together in just a few short weeks and made it happen. As I eluded to onstage, it was more fun and worthwhile to roadtrip to Harrisburg 2 1/2 hours for this event than it was to stay in Altoona and get depressed watching the Steelers lose.

FINAL CUT SPORTS

Because this rag covers the IMPORTANT stuff...

NASCAR WINSTON CUP RACING @ PELLEGRINE'S, ALTOONA 11/20/99

It was an intense night of Nascar racing at its finest at Pellegrine's International Electronic Speedway, near the front door at Pellegrine's, Altoona. If Dirty Dale, Kyle Petty, or Tony Stewart think they know what being in a scrap on the race track is all about, they haven't raced Daytona at Pelly's yet! The racing this night was hot, heavy and ferocious!

The first heat featured Brian " Goat Boy " against Truck Driver Sean, and gave a hint of the wild racing to follow when " Goat Boy " went into the grass immediately out of the green flag, came back across the racetrack and slammed the wall! Somehow, Brian's machine kept running, well enough that he gave chase to Sean in the race's closing moments, but couldn't catch him as the checkered flag waved. Sean won the first heat.

Next up was Sean's brother, Pat, taking on " Guv'nor Jesse. " Relatively speaking, this was a fairly clean race, with Pat leading from the green flag and the Guv'nor never quite catching him. Pat won this heat.

Another heated race was " Goat Boy " Brian taking on the Beer God. " Goat Boy " maintained better control of his machine this time around, and gave the Beer God a good race. But Fornari's M-G-D-powered special outlasted " The Goat, " dropping Brian to 0-2 on the night.

Things got intense in the next race, though - Schtiv The Door - driving the Final Cut/Domino's racing team Jetta, was challenged by Beer God Racing Team representative Long Tall Jim. Schtiv took the early lead, but Jim stayed in close pursuit, running ferocious smack against The Door and trying to bump The Door into the wall. Nascar fan Schtiv, though - borrowing a page from his idol, Dirty Dale - outfoxed Jim, dodging Jim's car and bumping Jim's rear bumper, causing Jim to roll

his car in the final seconds of the race. Scoreboard - Schtiv.

One last heat remained this night - Guv'nor Jesse vs. the Beer God. With maximum smack-running between the two race participants, Beer God led most of the way, but made a key error in M-G-D allotment, running low on fuel and giving Guv'nor Jesse - utilizing " gilliquads " of skills learned during his years in the Green Berets and WWF - the opportunity to catch and pass the soused God of brewskis for the victory.



SOUTHERN COMFORT

Words of Wisdom from Dixie submitted by Cut Keeper of the 13 Bottles of Victoria Secrets, Tabitha

YOU KNOW YOU'RE TRAILER TRASH WHEN ...

1. The Halloween pumpkin on your front porch has more teeth than your spouse.
2. You let your twelve-year-old daughter smoke at the dinner table in front of her kids.
3. You've been married three times and still have the same in-laws.
4. You think a woman who is " out of your league " bowls on a different night.
5. Jack Daniel makes your list of " Most Admired People " .
6. You think Genitalia is an Italian airline
7. You wonder how service stations keep their restrooms so clean.
8. Anyone in your family ever died right after saying," Hey, y'all watch this" .
9. You've got more than one brother named 'Darryl and Tommy
10. You think that Dom Perignon is a Mafia leader
11. Your wife's hairdo was once ruined by a ceiling fan.

12. You go to your family reunion looking for a date.
13. Your Junior/Senior Prom had Daycare.
14. You think the last words to The Star Spangled Banner are, " Gentlemen, start your engines. "
15. You lit a match in the bathroom and your house exploded right off its wheels.
16. You had to remove a toothpick for your wedding pictures.
17. The value of your truck goes up and down, depending on how much gas it has in it.
18. You have to go outside to get something out of the 'fridge.
19. One of your kids was born on a pool table.
20. Your dad walks you to school because you are both in the same grade.
21. You need one more hole punched in your card to get a freebie at the House of Tattoos.
22. You have flowers planted in a bathroom fixture in your front yard.
23. Ya can't get married to yer sweetheart 'cause there's a law against it.
24. You dated one of your parents' current spouses in high school.

CONNOISSEUR CUT

Pillaging D'Scribe's Album Collection

FULL MOON - FULL MOON (*Monster Records re-issue, 1980*) No, you probably have never heard of this band. They were a Harrisburg, PA-based band, they were never signed to a record deal, and they didn't last long enough for many people outside their most loyal following to remember them for any long period of time. Yet, without this band and album, it is unlikely I would be doing the Final Cut or writing about local music now.

Before I go on, BIG THANKS to Todd Batzel for hooking me up with this reissue of the self-titled 1980 album by Harrisburg's Full Moon. I once owned the original album, but abandoned it at the Penn State Altoona Campus radio station where I was "working " at the time, WARC.

It was fall 1980, my second year at Penn State Altoona. I was driving a lemon-yellow 1975 VW Rabbit 2-door at the time. I was in my radio infancy years, working for closed-circuit dorm radio WARC (I still have aircheck tapes from that period - boy did I SUCK!) And this band - Full Moon - and their self-titled album helped whet my appetite for local and live local rock music. WARC was very loosely formatted at that time - in fact, the "format " was whatever records the jocks brought in to play on their airshifts! So when Full Moon's heavy-rocking debut arrived at the station, its seven songs quickly found a home on my radio show, segued among tunes from Ozzy, AC/DC, Iron Maiden, Saxon, Riot, Scorpions, and whatever other metal I wanted to subject the dorm and Slep Center listenership to.

Sadly, I don't have any listing of band members, and none is given on this re-issue. But Full Moon's nucleus was the sibling songwriting team of John and Joseph Fischer, who penned all seven songs here. The base sound was driving midtempo metal of the Scorps/Van Halen/Thin Lizzy variety. One of the Fischer brothers sang lead vocals, and displayed decent range through the course of the album. The band itself was tight and solid here, with the two guitar players demonstrating strong riffage and shredding solo abilities early and often. In fact, the bluesy rocker "All I

Can Do, " which closes Side One, features some tasty dual leads. All seven tunes here still sound good to me. There was the charging opener "Night Calls, " to open Side One, and the midtempo "Maybe Some Other Time. " Upon hearing "(You're) All On Board " now, the Van Halen influence is apparent, as the riff is similar to "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love. " On Side Two, "Every Man " charged along much in the vein of "Night Calls. " "Sergeant At Arms " exposed an apparent Thin Lizzy influence, with a riff and rhythm similar to Lizzy's "Emerald. " And the album-closing "Winter City " showed a little more songwriting depth, with a more elaborate story-line and several tempo shifts through its course. The album sound quality was decent here as well, especially considering this was locally-produced in 1980, when bands on the local/regional level didn't have the access to quality recording facilities like they do now. Listening to this album now, I don't know what in earth possessed me to get rid of my original copy back in 1981!

Full Moon's influence on me didn't end with this album, though - the band actually played the Penn State Altoona Campus twice during the 1980-81 school year. The first concert, on November 13, 1980 at the Penn State Altoona Slep Center, was the first live local rock concert I ever witnessed! And I taped it! (I innocently brought in a portable tape recorder and recorded the show, with the idea of playing back live Full Moon footage on the air at WARC! Nobody told me I couldn't!) Full Moon did nearly all the songs on the album, and also performed heavy-rocking versions of "All Along The Watchtower, " "Like A Rolling Stone, " Skynyrd's "Saturday Night Special, " Molly Hatchet's (Allmans') "Dreams I'll Never See " and more. It was my first live local rock show, and my first tape bootleg! Full Moon returned several months later, in late winter, to perform at the Adler Gym. We never heard from them again. (I learned they eventually split up a year or two later, and the Fischer brothers went on to form a few other bands in the Harrisburg area.)

I don't know how big Full Moon ever was in the Harrisburg scene or beyond. But I do know their powerful live show and their self-titled 1980 album were pivotal in igniting my interest in local/regional rock. Impressed with their album and what they did live, I was eager to soon check out other live rock bands who played the Altoona Campus, and eventually - once I transferred - the Penn State main campus. My appetite for local rock music started here.

CUT COMMENTARY

By D'Scribe

"JOHN - OFF HIS ROCKER "

Obviously by now you've heard about the controversy surrounding Atlanta Braves pitcher John Rocker, who opened his piehole and spewed a lot of nasty comments about New York, minorities and gays in a recent article in Sports Illustrated magazine. Rocker was ordered to undergo psychological counseling by Major League Baseball's commissioner, and the Atlanta Braves organization was contemplating disciplinary action against him as well.

Some people have argued in Rocker's behalf, stating that he is entitled to freedom of speech and can say whatever he wants to in this country. Like most people, I think what Rocker said was wrong and idiotic. I concede that he did have the right to say what he wanted. But I liken his situation with the Atlanta Braves and Major League Baseball with my situation in radio. Yes, I may only physically " work " on air for four hours a day and do remotes, etc. But off air and in public, I still " represent " the station, and anything I say and do publicly can reflect upon the station favorably or unfavorably. If I would say something controversial that would

bring negative publicity upon the station, the station could reprimand or take disciplinary action against me as a representative of the station, whether my comments were made on air or off.

Likewise, as a high-profile athlete who is in the spotlight, John Rocker - whether he likes it or not - represents the Atlanta Braves and Major League Baseball whether on or off the field. His bigoted comments brought negative attention upon the Braves and MLB. If they did not take action or at least reprimand Rocker, their lack of action could be construed as endorsement of Rocker's comments, and would tarnish the Braves' and Baseball's image further. By taking the action that they did, both Major League Baseball and the Braves organization sent the message that bigoted remarks are not proper conduct by a player representing their organizations, and that such actions require disciplinary and corrective action.

It can be argued that John Rocker is entitled to freedom of speech, and that is true, he is. But with freedom of speech comes responsibility and accountability. "Freedom of speech" does not give someone the right to yell "Fire!" in a crowded building, or to drive into a minority section of town and yell racial epithets. Granted, what Rocker said was not nearly that inflammatory, and was probably little more than testosterone-induced smack-running in order to draw attention to himself. But as a representative of Baseball and the Braves, his comments were irresponsible, and as a high-profile representative of those two entities, he is accountable to those organizations when his remarks draw negative publicity towards them.

Rocker has since publicly apologized for those remarks, but the damage is done. Many of his Braves teammates want nothing to do with Rocker, and it will be interesting to see what kind of reaction Rocker receives in New York's Shea Stadium this coming season whenever the Braves come to town. Bottom line - John was off his Rocker. Open mouth...insert foot.

GUEST RANTING

By The Ranter

When I asked D'Scribe to guest on his column I was pretty hot under the collar about the problems in the Altoona music Scene, now that I have calmed down a little and have set myself to the task of writing The problems are still there but, now I don't require any four letter words to describe them.

It's all too easy to place the blame for the tedium that sadly passes for a music scene in our fair little burgh on a number of sources. It's easy to blame the bar owners cause, let's face it they are only in it for the quick buck, anyway. I do mean quick buck, by the way, nobody seems to have an obvious or coherent plan for attracting the kind of clientele that wont barf in the restroom or start free-for-all bar fights over some chick or a stepped on toe. While my generous host has had a few choice words to say about that, in issues past, it's not the only problem. The sad truth is I've met Bohemian gutter weasels with more integrity than some of the saloonkeepers, hereabouts. When you say you will pay \$200 bucks PAY TWO HUNDRED BUCKS, DAMMIT. It's only right. Another thing, if you book us, we spent every waking moment of our so-called lives from the moment we are booked to ten minutes before we go on, trying to persuade our friends, and people we don't know, to come to YOUR BAR AND SPEND MONEY, when you cancel at the last minute you make us look like idiots, stop it. Things happen, I understand but I've had gigs that have been booked for months in advance cancelled by emergency vacations, just what the hell is an emergency vacation, anyway? If ya didn't want us to play at your bar, don't book us in the first place. I'd rather hear no, than to have to put up with this nonsense. Here's a clue, a booking a month or so later is a poor substitute for

the booking you cancel this weekend.

The truth is, this is a minor problem, we musicians who put up with this garbage must shoulder a lot of the blame for the sad state of the Altoona music scene. First, we put up with all the crap the bar owners are trying to pull on us. Second, if ya wanna a beer, have a beer not a keg, each. There is nothing worse than seeing a drunken gang (I won't call them a band) of morons slur their way through "Sweet Home Alabama. " That reminds me, I would like to call all musicians who read these words to join me in a six-month moratorium on all Lynyrd Skynyrd covers. I realize that this would cause more than a few cover bands here in town to have to learn a whole night's worth of music but it'll be good for you, trust me. Play something else, anything else, challenge yourself, do something different. Don't think that because you have a few gigs under your belt that your musical education is complete. This is a never-ending journey. Keep learning keep growing, get better.

While the Bar owners and musicians make up a portion of the difficulties, the real problem is you the audience. You dive this beast after all. Bar owners, and musicians too for that matter, only give the people what they can get away with giving you. If you demand better places to play, they will be built, if you demand better bands, guys will practice more, if you want no cover charge, well. . . you have to do your part, too, but it's not unreasonable to think that if you buy booze and food, and the bar makes money, it can afford to pay musicians decently, eliminating the need for a cover charge. It's all up to you audience so quit your bitchin and whinin and put your money where your mouth is. **D'Ranter**

THE FINAL CUT is recklessly spewed from an emotionally and physically abused computer in an inner sanctum in the heart of Northeast Altoona, PA. The opinions spouted off with total disregard for the feelings or weak emotional stability of lesser beings are solely those of D'Scribe (Jim Price), D'Drummer (Kevin Siegel), Da Boy (Mark Wesesky), Big Dave Rainey, Sctiv the Friendly Sebastiano's Doorman, The Common Man, D'Pebble and Al Slavicsky, and do not reflect the opinions, attitudes, or massive corporate policies of WBXQ/WBRX, Majic 104-Dot-9, 3-W-S, Coconuts Music & Movies, PA Musician, Felony In Progress, families, friends, acquaintances, pets, local bands, insects, mold and related spores, radio station prize pigs and other lower life forms, Claudio at Sabs, Big John and Jodie K at Peter C's, Bill Goldberg, Stone Cold Steve Austin, the Miller, Genessee, or Heineken Brewing Companies, the makers of Rupleminz, the Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Nissan, and Harley-Davidson Companies, all national record companies and touring bands, or anyone we tend to irritate by writing this crap. Translation: We Just Don't Care. Comments, recordings, artwork, letters and FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS are always welcome...send to our snail mail address: The Final Cut, c/o Jim Price, 1104 South Catherine St., Altoona, PA 16602, or e-mail us at jpnwcent@charter.net. Also, check out The Final Cut website at www.rockpage.net (because once in a blue moon, Ron the Webmaster does update it). Be sure and check out both the print and online editions, because each has stories, photos, diseases and general drivel not found in the other. Unauthorized copying of the print edition is mandatory, it saves us money (like we have any), and copier paper (see comments after money). When you finish with this edition, give it to someone you like...or someone you hate...or someone you don't even know...we really don't give a damn; we here at The Final Cut are really damn cheap and PROUD OF IT!!! Keep out of reach of children, small animals, clergy, John Rocker, Marge Schott and household pets. Back issues are available, should you run short on bird cage liner or need paper for constructing paper

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