

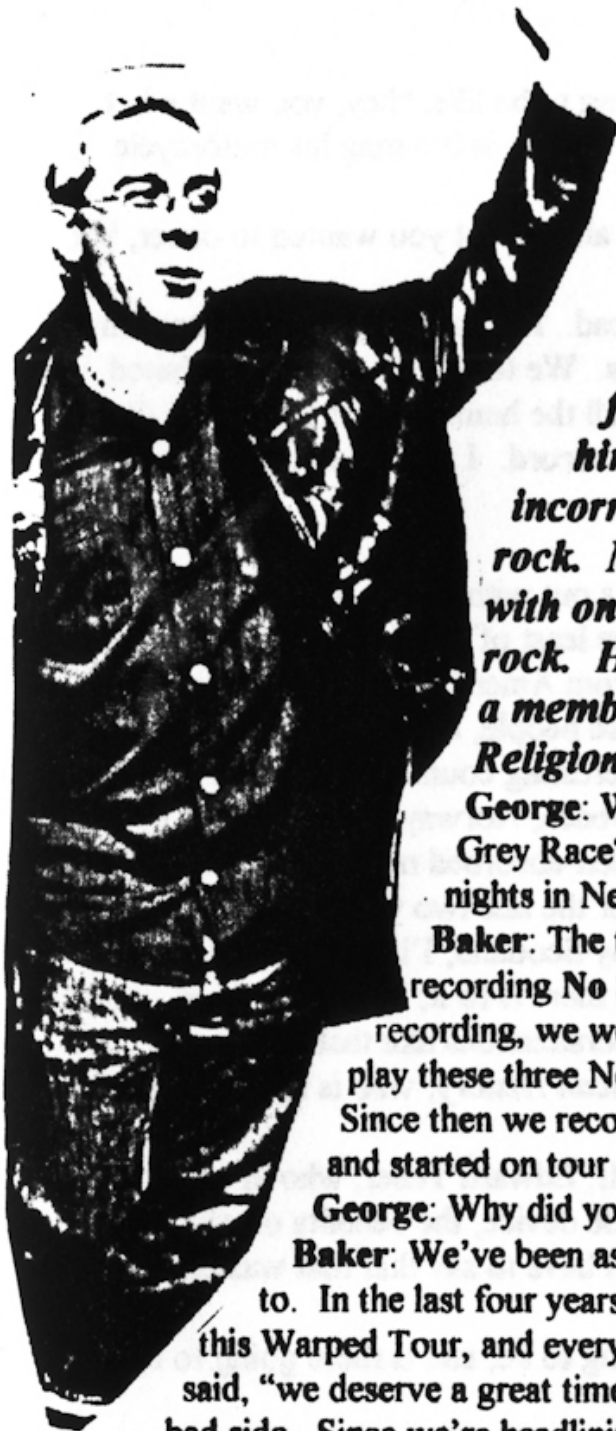


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Inside: Interviews with Gwar, Brian Baker, and Tre Cool, Reviews and Stories



Brian Baker is one of the hardest working punk rockers in the industry. After helping put such old school bands as Minor Threat and Dag Nasty into the big leagues, he has found a home in Bad Religion. Filling the hole left by Epitaph's guru, four years ago, Baker has nestled himself into a world full of political incorrectness, crossbusters, and thesaurus rock. Not to mention that he shares a stage with one of the most outspoken voices in punk rock. Here's an interview with a legend, and a member of my favorite bands... Bad Religion.

George: What's been going on in the last year, since the Grey Race? I believe you did three tours and the three nights in New York.

Baker: The three shows were actually done while we were recording *No Substance*. We actually took a break from recording, we were in Upstate New York, and we had time to play these three New York shows in December, I think it was. Since then we recorded some more, finally finished the record, and started on tour about ten days ago.

George: Why did you choose to join the Warped Tour this year?

Baker: We've been asked to do it before, and we've never been able to. In the last four years, I've had a lot of friends who have gone on this Warped Tour, and every single person says how great it is. So we said, "we deserve a great time this year." There's so many benefits and no bad side. Since we're headlining, we're taking it a little more seriously, and we're doing some really cool stuff. We're going to put this big Bad Religion tent in the middle of the audience. It's a twenty by thirty foot tent. Inside it we're going to have our friend, James, who is going to run *No Substance* radio. It's a pirate radio station that illegally jumps on a radio band in whatever city we're in. They can't catch him, and he's got a thirty mile radius. Benefits are obvious: We're going to broadcast our show live, so if you can't get in or you are in your car you can still hear us live. Second, the shits on all day. Bring in your demo tapes, if you are in a band. We will play them on the radio. We're going to do interviews, band members are going to come in and hang out. This tent is going to have that in it, and unless the guy screws up, I'm going to have a psychic. He's brilliant, this astrologer, mind reader psychic guy from Chicago. He understands the duality of having a Bad Religion, *No Substance* tent with a palmist in it, and he thinks it's a fun idea. His wife is a dominatrix, but we haven't decided if that's appropriate or not. During the day, our lighting guy, John is getting a chef's hat, and we bought two huge barbecues, so we're going to have a

vegan barbecue and a meat barbecue, and it's going to be like, "hey, you want a hot dog kid?" We want to make it a hub of activity. Graffin is bringing his motorcycle. It's going to be a huge summercamp.

George: What are some of the topics on the new album that you wanted to cover, but you didn't get to?

Baker: Topically I think we hit the nail on the head. It's basically about frustration at where we are at the end of this century as humans. We tend to focus on the United States since that's where we're from, but I think all the human issues that are in the forefront of our lives have been dealt with on this record. I don't think there's any stones left unturned.

George: You have a song about England...

Baker: It's not really about England. It just starts out with a little poke. You see... We hate England, for a number of reasons, not the least of which would be the Revolutionary war, which you might remember from American history quite clearly. We went to a lot of trouble to get away from those people, and I'm not about to go kiss ass to their music community. It's a very interesting country. I just find it amazing that Bad Religion is a top ten act in Germany, Sweden, Norway, Poland, and we can't get the time of day in England. Their pompous, self-absorbed music press can go fuck themselves. We've canceled our British shows for the last two years. We refuse to go there. The fans are the ones who lose. I'll go play Scotland, I'll play Ireland, but I will not play England. I hate those people. That's all there is to it; I just hate them. And we're punk, so we're allowed to make stupid generalizations like that.

George: In the song, *The Biggest Killer In American History*, who is the biggest killer in American history?

Baker: In the context of that song, it would be Mr. Edward Teller, who in conjunction with his friend, Openheimer (sp?), created this little device, the benefits of which we saw in 1945, in this little Japanese island. I would have to say that that was the biggest killer in American history.

George: What is the first single off the album going to be, and is there going to be a video?

Baker: Not really, because why should we make a commercial that they're not going to show? The video medium has always bothered me, because I don't like re-interpreting a song in a visual that may, or may not be accurate. The single for radio is *Shades of Truth*. I don't know if we're are going to make a video for it. I don't know if we need to. If we do, we would definitely do it by ourselves. We would fund it ourselves, and it would be more for cable people, for private video shows. Cause those are the only things I would watch. MTV is just game shows and Puff Daddy, and I don't want anything to do with that.

George: What were your feelings about *Tested*?

Baker: I enjoyed it thoroughly, I just wish it was available in this country at a non-import price. At the time we were recording it and releasing it in Europe, Atlantic, which was a completely different organization then it is now, and was not interested in releasing it. So what we tried to do is work around the back door and get a European distributor so we can sell it at a reasonable price here. We had this grand plan and it didn't work out. We are going to get that album out domestically. Just don't know when.

George: *Dream of Unity*... I found the music and lyrics to be both simple and broad. Is the song forthright or am I missing something?

Brian: No, you're not missing anything, and I think it's a beautiful song. I think it's a simple and obvious song, and the merit of it is the way Greg sings it more so than the way it is constructed. It's just one of a hundred and sixty Bad Religion songs, and it certainly isn't a flag that anyone is rallying behind. Though the lyrics are simple, and quite anti-Bad Religion, I still feel that they are poignant, and something I can agree with.

George: One hundred and sixty songs. Have you learned them all?

Baker: No way. I learned forty really quickly... about three weeks. That was the tough part. Now I'm picking it up quickly. When I joined the band, *Recipe For Hate* was the only album I knew. I didn't own anything before *Recipe For Hate*, with the exception of *How Could Hell Be Any Worse*. So I had to familiarize myself with not just these songs, but these whole bodies of works. Now that I've been in this band for about four years, I know all the records, even the songs we don't play live. You can say the name of the song, and I can think in my head, "OK, that's that." We just started playing *When*, off *Suffer*, about two days ago. We didn't have a copy of *Suffer* with us. "Ok, let's do *When*. Well what key is it in?" And you just kind of go.

George: So you are throwing your own twist to old songs?

Baker: I never just learn the part. I always do my own version of it. From the very beginning, I had my own free reign. On *Tested* you can compare the two. I play totally different than Brett did. The only time I play solos that are Brett's solos are when I think it's a key to the song. Like the song *Modern Man*; I play that song note for note, because I believe that solo is a hook to the song, but when it's just a personal expression solo I don't even think about what's on the record... I usually don't even know what's on the record.

George: What was it like doing Ric Ocasics new album? How were you approached, and did you enjoy doing it?

Baker: I loved doing it. I was approached, because Ric did the *Grey Race*, and about the middle of the *Grey Race*, he came to me, and said, "I'm gonna do a record. Do you wanna play guitar for me?" I said sure. Finished the *Grey Race*. Ran into him a couple of times at bars, talked to him on the phone. A year later I picked up the phone in a hotel, and it's Ric. He says he's going to do this record, and when I got off tour I went to New York, and

did the record. Melissa from Hole, great bass player, I had a great time with her. Did six or seven shows with her. It was a great experience. It was like winning an MTV contest... get to be in the Cars.

George: What is your outlook on the fans from then to now?

Baker: You know, there's a lot of parallels you can draw between the old days and now. The one key element missing now from 1980 is the danger. Punk rock is no longer dangerous. It's not shocking. You're not taking a risk by throwing your hat into a ring with this. The most popular kids in public high schools are punk rockers now, instead of the least popular kids, and that's something I do miss, because it was a rush. Especially when I was fifteen. That is one angle on it. As far as playing to kids

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half my age; I would not be doing this if I had not been fifteen and gone to watch people twice my age. I would like to think that perhaps what I'm doing is affecting somebody's life as mine was. My entire adult life has been formed by the experiences I had when I was fifteen years old, when I found punk rock, and six months later found myself in Minor Threat. If that happens to Johnny Slam Dance tonight, at Irving Plaza, then I've done a very good job.

George: Are you still in contact with Ian Mckaye, Dave Smalley, or any of the Junkyard guys?

Braker: I live in DC, so when we're not on tour I see Ian maybe once a week. We're very good friends. Dave Smalley lives in Virginia, about an hour from me, and I talk to him about once a week. I have very little bad blood with any ex band members, except one guy we kicked out of Dag Nasty, the drummer named London May, who's in Samhain.

Who if I ever see I'm gonna beat the shit out of him. Other than that, I don't know anyone else I don't like.

George: Explain *10 In 2010*. It reminds me of a movie soundtrack.

Brian: It's overpopulation and a cool riff, and one of my favorite guitar solos, that I did, because it sounds like there's a wahwah peddle, and there isn't one. The beginning of that solo... every time I listen to that record I still can't figure out why it sounds like that. I was literally playing no effect at all.

George: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Baker: I got this today (unveiling a gold record of *Stranger Than Fiction*). I've never gotten one of these in my life. Of course it would be better if it was a record that I was on, but it's just so fucking weird... I can not believe that 500,000 people in this country bought this record. I just can't believe this. What I can't believe is that this is definitely not Bad Religion's greatest work. I like it, but I like *Recipe For Hate* better, I like *No Substance* better, I like *Suffer* better. It's better than the *Grey Race*, this is also better than *Against The Grain*. (Looking at the cd cover, framed under the gold record) Then again, they may just be tormenting me by making me hang a picture of Brett Gurewitz up on my wall.



Bad Religion at the Wetlands, NYC