

Glasgow menagerie: U2's 'Zooropa' hits UK



Halliday snaps!  
**CURVE** go  
'Cuckoo'

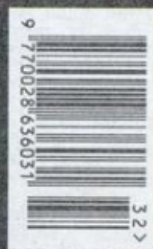
# NEW MUSICAL EXPERIENCE



Little baby puffin



# ELFIN AND BLINDING! BJORK shouts to the top



HILLS

CREDIT TO THE NATION ★ THE LEVELLERS ★ ALPHA & OMEGA  
ROBERT PLANT ★ POGUES ★ BAD RELIGION ★ BOO RADLEYS  
JOHN HEGLEY ★ FAMILY CAT ★ SKYSCRAPER ★ BUJU BANTON

Germany Dm 5.00 Spain Ptas 250

Bjork photographed by Kevin Cummins

# THE SEX EPISTLES

In Iran, anti-pop vigilantes called Bassijis patrol the streets with loaded automatic rifles. In Chile, one of the first actions of the CIA-backed Pinochet junta was to hunt down and murder left-wing folk singers.

In Newcastle, a wee Scottish youth tugs on the sleeve of indie punk band Bad Religion's singer, Greg Graffin, and says, "Excuse me. I hope y'don't mind me asking, but how do you reconcile your ideals with your lifestyle?"

Lifestyle anarcho-liberalism - that weird bastard offspring of the monastic poverty vow and good old British snobbery. The last sad dribble down the decades of Crass' vastly influential veg-fuelled fury. It's the only political idea of any note amongst that sad fag-end of youth culture the media labels as "crusty". Was it ever thus? Was it f—.

Hippy and punk swirled with energy, invention and an explosion of ideas. Crusty is a celebration of ignorance, inertia, defeatism, New Age superstition and pious smeller-than-thou moralism. It is youth culture stripped of zip, sex and glamour.

Alan Parker isn't a parody, he's a role model. Metropolitan Britain has always picked up and tossed off youth cultures at five times the pace of the rest of the world, but crusty looks set to stay as our national folk costume for a long, long time. Is Britain burnt out?

**MEANWHILE, IN** pockets of the USA, the punk rock velociraptor still bops along, occasionally spitting out a Hole, a Babes In Toyland, a Nirvana or a Rollins and, yes, leaving massive piles of festering cack in its wake. But the very fact that it still survives - with genuine organic links all the way back to 1977 and beyond - is incredible in itself.

**"Look at *The Bible* this way. Was it cool that Jehovah killed all the first-born of the Egyptians? NO! I won't worship a God that f—ed up! He acts like a f—ing spoiled teenager throughout the entire f—ing book!" - Brett**

Three bands: LA's Bad Religion, formed when woolly mammoths still trod the North American tundra, are actually making a living from their gigs, their label, Epitaph, and the ridiculously high sales of their incredibly tuneful latest album, *Recipe For Hate*.

Label-mates No FX are clever little bleeders. After the release of an EP featuring the epically-titled 'Kill The White Man', they hit home with the LP 'White Trash, Two Heebies And A Bean' (drawing attention to the band's ethnic mix), which features a Louis Armstrong paean to the drug-free 'straight edge' lifestyle and an extremely rude and skittish early-Clashy admission of the superiority of lesbian sex. Remember how punk rock was supposed to make you laugh?

Also selling by the bucketful,

● Punk rock USA is alive, well and still has its seethingly organic roots stretching back to '77. One of its finest exponents are LA's BAD RELIGION, a *bona fide* indie phenomenon who sell out gigs at London's Forum with little publicity. STEVEN WELLS meets the anti-war, anti-'God', serious tune dudes and asks, how come America produces Nirvana and all we get is a UK Subs revival? Bad boys: ANDY WILLISHER



The spirit of '77 is still with us! And travelling in a comfy tour bus! The blaspheme team: (l-r) Greg, the other Greg, Brett, Jay and Bobby

New York's Quicksand have somehow combined the dynamics of Metallica, Jane's Addiction, the N-band and Fugazi. The lean, harsh, roaring metal that results is beautiful and, of course, eminently marketable.

Snapped up by a multinational and loaded with the kinds of expectations that have smothered dozens of other bands in the last few years,

articulating what scientists know as 'The Nirvana Syndrome', "because by definition what makes them alternative is not being liked by the mainstream. If something is popular, then what is it an alternative to?"

'Recipe For Hate' is a lyrically complex, accomplished record, awash with melodies and (quel horreur!) close harmonies. Onstage, the songs, most of which are somewhat more

to test man's faith).

"Look at *The Bible* this way," says Brett. "Was it cool that Jehovah killed all the first-born of the Egyptians? NO!" Pretty 'metal' thing to do, though...

"It's metal, OK, but it's not cool. I won't worship a God that f—ed up! He acts like a f—ing spoiled teenager throughout the entire f—ing book!"

Why is it that the USA - the greatest economic, cultural, scientific and military power the world has ever seen, a nation founded on the concept of rationality - why does it have a larger proportion of medieval arseholes than any country outside the Middle East?

"Because the average American has the brain capacity of a twinkie."

Greg got his masters degree after Bad Religion split up during the making of an abysmal 'experimental' third album. Other band members left to

"immerse themselves in the study of hallucinogenic drugs." It took eight years for them to reform - to inevitable cries of "sell-out".

Therapy? Schmerapy! Why does the UK seem able to produce so few fringe/punk rock bands of this calibre? Perhaps it is because we haven't the musicians who have grown with the music (the Sub Pop boys and members of Quicksand, Fugazi, Hole, Nirvana and Bad Religion are all of a similar age). So they produce 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' and we get the UK Subs revival.

The best American rock music is being made by veterans of a scene which, no matter how fragmented it has become, is well into the latter stages of its third decade. A scene that, ironically enough, is held together with the cement of that very same intolerance and puritanism that is so often directed at its most brilliant and successful offspring.

"You might have guessed from the way we look that we're not awfully bothered about staying underground," says Brett. "I mean very few bands would turn up for a gig like this in a tour bus."

**GA! TRAVELLING** in comfort! FASCISTS! At the recent SWP 'Is Pop Turning Radical?' debate a Huggy Bear fan sneered at Rage Against The Machine because they are signed to a major label. When asked if he bought his hair colouring, food and clothes entirely from certified 'independent' sources, he replied that the questioner was

not entitled to comment because he had a job. I am not making this up.

"A lot of the things that become massively popular and retain some value, attain that success as a kind of side effect," claims Greg. "Debbie Gibson is going for a Top Ten single with every record, Nirvana weren't. I think that happens a lot."

*Zen And The Art Of Credibility Maintenance*, anybody?

"I think that art in general is meant to be shared by a general populace, not targeted for an elite. Every time we put a record out we don't just do it for the people who have been loyal for years."

"I was a hypocrite when I was a kid," admits Brett. "I mean as soon as X (*seminal 70s LA punk band*) grew in popularity they were disowned by LA punks. On the other hand, I would go and see a band like The Clash at a 5,000 seat venue and think nothing of it."

"But then," adds Greg, "the X changed their style whilst The Clash never did."

"Oh, come on, they released a disco record!"

"You've not still got a duck on disco, surely?"

"Disco sucks! Disco sucked back then and disco still sucks!"

That's homophobic, racist, macho rock bullshit and it always was.

"Homophobic? No, because we like Right Said Fred. We prefer homosexuals to heterosexuals but disco still sucks!"

Christ, seven years on and twinkie-brained US rock has still to wake up to dance music.

Give them time, they're only Americans...

oblique takes on the usual US punky themes (war is wrong, religion is crap, etc) burst into life. Watch Graffin's berserk mime-on-methamphetamine mic destruction (somewhat reminiscent of Jello Biafra during his Am I Mental Or What? phase) and you realise that with a little twist here and a little nudge there, Bad Religion have the potential to reach a huge audience. Serious chewers, dude.

**IT IS** fitting that the singer of a band who have railed so often and so brilliantly against the stupidity of debasing yourself before 'God' and other spooks and ghosties should be a qualified paleontologist (meaning that he studies the very same fossils and dinosaurs' bits that the born-again Christians claim 'God' put there

