

BAD TIMES

The Official Occasional Newsletter of Bad Religion

ISSUE NUMBER SIX, JANUARY, 1997

WHAT IT WAS

Okay, so it has been a long time since the last issue, and in fact, the last issue had a much fancier look. It actually began to look like a professional newsletter, as if the band was going to have a go at releasing a slick, glossy letter that might even come out at predictable intervals. Not exactly. The last issue was an experiment, and unfortunately it didn't really lead to brilliant results. It was a labor-intensive project and we realized there were better things for us to put our labor into....such as touring and making music. The other problem with that issue was our attempt at merchandising by mail order. We are sorry that it didn't work out the way we planned it. Most of you who ordered merchandise from the back of the last issue received our apologies already, but let this be an official recall of that section. Don't order any more merchandise from the last issue, our organization is moving away from that kind of merchandising and eventually (hopefully this Spring) we will have our own web page: www.badreligion.com that will be a merchandise e-mail for BR products.

Currently, we are in the midst of a computer nightmare. Our electronic mail system is undergoing an overhaul and we

should be up and running efficiently and reliably within the next couple of weeks. You may have noticed if you sent us mail in the past that sometimes mail messages would be returned. This is because our mail server would not operate 24/7/12/365 all the time. It required an office administrator to monitor it and we didn't have one. Now the mail server is being made more reliable and, hopefully, less labor intensive. In today's world, it should be simple to have a carefree e-mail server, but as in many areas of life, this too is more an ideal than a reality...the internet still has a long way to evolve before it is the first-choice medium for communications.

THE GRAY RACE TOUR

In 1996 BR traveled more than ever before. We played more shows than ever before, and played in front of more people than ever before. It is likely that you had more of a chance to see us in concert last year than ever before also.

Every time we play a show in a new geographic region we leave with a great sense of accomplishment, especially if the show was sold-out (which was the case in

all regions last year). These occasions are special because there is only one time that you first enter a new region. Every repeat trip to that area is slightly less exciting, slightly more predictable, and feels a little bit more familiar. This has its advantages too, but the sense of anticipation and edginess provides for a special experience and usually a great show. We were lucky enough to have played in some great places last year for the first time. Those of you who were there to see us for the first time deserve our special thanks and we hope that it left you wanting to see us again. And for those of you who were repeaters, whether it was your 2nd, 3rd, or 29th BR show, we are especially grateful. We want you to know that although our inspiration to continue comes from many sources, a lot of it comes directly from you. Thanks for a particularly memorable year!

AND FOR THOSE WHO MISSED IT...

Here is a list of all the shows we played in 1996. Those with an asterisk (*) were new territories that we played for the first time:

1. 02/29/96 Berlin, Germany
2. 03/01/96 Hamburg, Germany
3. 03/02/96 Cologne, Germany
4. 03/04/96 Frankfurt, Germany
5. 03/05/96 Munich, Germany
6. 03/05/96 Vienna, Austria
7. 03/07/96 Zurich, Switzerland
8. 03/08/96 Paris, France
9. 03/09/96 Utrecht, Netherlands
10. 03/10/96 Gent*, Belgium
11. 03/12/96 Copenhagen, Denmark
12. 03/13/96 Oslo*, Norway
13. 03/14/96 Stockholm, Sweden
14. 03/15/96 London, England
15. 03/30/96 Seattle, WA
16. 03/31/96 Las Vegas, NV
17. 04/01/96 Las Vegas, NV
18. 04/02/96 Albuquerque, NM
19. 04/04/96 Austin, TX
20. 04/05/96 Dallas, TX
21. 04/06/96 Houston, TX
22. 04/08/96 New Orleans, LA
23. 04/10/96 Tampa, FL
24. 04/11/96 FT Lauderdale, FL
25. 04/12/96 Orlando, FL
26. 04/13/96 Atlanta, GA
27. 04/15/96 Philadelphia, PA
28. 04/16/96 Washington, DC
29. 04/17/96 New York, NY
30. 04/19/96 Asbury Park, NJ
31. 04/20/96 Providence, RI
32. 04/21/96 Boston, MA
33. 04/22/96 Montreal, QUE
34. 04/24/96 Toronto, ONT
35. 04/25/96 Detroit, MI
36. 04/26/96 Cleveland, OH
37. 04/27/96 Cincinnati, OH
38. 04/28/96 Chicago, IL
39. 04/30/96 Minneapolis, MN
40. 05/03/96 Portland, OR
41. 05/04/96 Vancouver, BC
42. 05/06/96 Davis, CA
43. 05/08/96 San Francisco, CA
44. 05/09/96 Santa Cruz, CA
45. 05/10/96 Fresno, CA
46. 05/12/96 Phoenix, AZ
47. 05/13/96 San Diego, CA
48. 05/14/96 San Diego, CA
49. 05/15/96 Denver, CO
50. 05/16/96 Salt Lake City, UT
51. 06/14/96 Hultsfred, Sweden
52. 06/15/96 Aarhus*, Denmark
53. 06/16/96 Bielefeld, Germany
54. 06/18/96 Erlangen, Germany
55. 06/19/96 Munich, Germany
56. 06/20/96 Prague*, Czech.
57. 06/21/96 Lahti*, Finland
58. 06/22/96 Loreley, Germany
59. 06/24/96 Stuttgart, Germany
60. 06/25/96 Linz, Austria
61. 06/26/96 Berlin, Germany

62. 06/27/96 Roskilde, Germany
63. 06/29/96 Oslo, Norway
64. 06/30/96 Dortmund, Germany
65. 07/06/96 Bremen, Germany
66. 07/07/96 Tallinn*, Estonia
67. 07/08/96 Winterthur, Switzerland
68. 07/09/96 Rome*, Italy
69. 07/11/96 Milan, Italy
70. 07/13/96 Athens*, Greece
71. 07/14/96 Escalarre, Spain
72. 09/06/96 Miami Beach, FL
73. 09/07/96 Melbourne, FL
74. 09/08/96 Jacksonville, FL
75. 09/10/96 Winston-Salem*, NC
76. 09/11/96 Raleigh*, NC
77. 09/12/96 Baltimore*, MD
78. 09/13/96 Asbury Park, NJ
79. 09/14/96 Portchester, NY
80. 09/15/96 Danbury*, CT
81. 09/17/96 Syracuse*, NY
82. 09/18/96 Buffalo, NY
83. 09/19/96 Pittsburgh, PA
84. 09/20/96 Columbus, OH
85. 09/21/96 Milwaukee, WI
86. 09/25/96 Palo Alto, CA
87. 09/26/96 Los Angeles, CA
88. 09/27/96 Los Angeles, CA
89. 09/28/96 Los Angeles, CA
90. 11/06/96 Seattle, WA
91. 11/12/96 Tokyo, Japan
92. 11/13/96 Tokyo, Japan
93. 11/14/96 Niigata*, Japan
94. 11/16/96 Nagano*, Japan
95. 11/18/96 Fukuoka*, Japan
96. 11/20/96 Osaka, Japan
97. 11/21/96 Nagoya, Japan
98. 11/22/96 Sapporo, Japan
99. 11/29/96 RioDeJainero*, Brasil
100. 11/30/96 SaoPaulo*, Brasil
101. 12/01/96 Curitiba, Brasil

WHAT IT IS

One would think that this tour itinerary would suffice for a world-tour. But there are many territories that we didn't hit and we wish there were more days in the year. One of those we will be visiting in February is Australia

102. 02/14/97 Melbourne*, Australia
103. 02/15/97 Melbourne, Australia
104. 02/16/97 Adelaide*, Australia
105. 02/17/97 Perth*, Australia
106. 02/19/97 Canberra*, Australia
107. 02/21/97 Brisbane*, Australia
108. 02/22/97 Sydney*, Australia
109. 02/23/97 Sydney, Australia

On February 24, 1997 we will officially be finished with our world tour.

AND ON TO THE NEXT PROJECT...

During our travels, we began experimenting with sound. At first we were just interested in having a recorded log of the different venues we played. We were curious as to how the subtle differences in room dimensions at the various halls and theaters would enhance or detract from the sound of the band. We thought this basic kind of research could aid us in our live performances. Our first goal, then, was to find a recording medium that could withstand the rigors of traveling and provide adequate resolution. A format that met these criteria was already in use at Greg Graffin's studio, and it proved to be a perfect medium for the road as well, the Alesis ADAT multitrack recorder.

We began recording the shows in April and it soon became apparent that we were on to something unique. Not only did the ADATs provide an accurate log of what the show sounded like, they also were really exciting to listen to during playback. At this point we realized that we might

have stumbled on to a great opportunity to make a cool sounding live album, one that didn't sound faked or overdubbed with studio tracks and audiences that weren't really there. And that is exactly what we did. The results will be available in your local independent record stores in March.

TESTED

Will you stand

The test of time?

The members of BR have high regard for things that endure against the odds. We thought Tested was a good title for this album because in many respects we have stood the test of time. We are sure this album will as well. It is a very personal project, and one that nicely illustrates our live heritage, and details the consistency in our music over the last 16 years. Here are some statistics about the new live album:

Title: TESTED

Songs: 27 total, about 70 minutes of music
3 previously unreleased tracks,
recorded at PolypterusStudio
24 of them from 11 different studio
albums

Shows: Songs were selected from 60
recorded shows around the
world; roughly 1800 takes
were reviewed

Production: 16-track digital recording, no
overdubs, all tracks are the original
takes from the live show
Produced by Bad Religion and
Ronnie Kimball

Package: A twenty-page color booklet
accompanies the CD. It includes
scores of candid photographs from
numerous shows, both from
backstage and audience perspective.
The text of the booklet is analytical
and personal including production

notes and venue musings by Greg
Graffin. The vinyl LP is a double,
gate-fold album with the same
photos as the CD booklet, and the
same text.

Release: In America it will be an import
record on the Dagnet label from
Germany. It will be available by
early March from primarily
independent record stores.
It will be released in Europe and the
rest of the world in middle February
on the Dagnet label, or regional
SONY affiliate label.

Price: Because it is an import in North
America, it will be SLIGHTLY more
expensive than a regular CD. We
emphasize "slightly" because it will
be much cheaper than most imports,
and actually cheaper also than most
domestic CDS with as many songs
and 70 minutes of music. We are
recommending a price of \$15.99 in
US stores. Incidentally, most
imports start at least \$4.00 higher
and most special packages like this
one are well over \$22.00.
Independent record stores will be
able to make their normal profit and
still keep the price at \$15.99. For
the rest of the world, the CD will
be at a regular domestic price
(which incidentally is as high as the
US import price; strangely we
Americans enjoy cheaper prices on
almost everything)

The North American "Glitch": We are
sorry that this album could not be released
in North America as a domestic product.
Our label, Atlantic, has the right to disallow
a release if they feel it is not appropriate.
They exercised that right on this project.
We were determined to get the record to

our North American audience and they agreed not to stand in the way if we brought it in as an import. Luckily we have a very supportive label throughout the rest of the world who believed in this project as it came to fruition. Dragnet worked out a way to ship the record from Europe into the USA at a relatively low cost. It required BR and Dragnet to both to make less money; BR in the form of a reduced royalty rate, and Dragnet in the form of a lower margin of profit. But it was well worth it to us in order to be able to get it to our domestic fans. So, in short, we are sorry it is a little more expensive, but we are really excited for you to hear it, and we are glad that you can get it easily if you live in North America.

TESTED LYRICS:

Since most of the songs on "Tested" are from other BR albums we did not include a lyrics sheet. This is also due to the fact that the 20 page color booklet is filled with other interesting text. However, if you need a lyrics sheet we are making one available for free if you reach us at one of the contact addresses below. However, here are the lyrics to the unreleased songs:

TESTED

They say there's a place free of trouble and care
And you have to pass a test to make it there
It has something to do with a road that's straight and narrow
And the only way to go it is by being right and thorough
There 's always one more hill to climb
Bombarded by Multiple choices 24/7
Navigating a tangled web of logic and passion
Guided by subconscious voices, astute and

sharpened
Tested, Tested, Ooohh
Often times we're made to wonder what we're supposed to do
Stand and Deliver or see the conflict through
And as we long and proceed to build our castles in the sky
Our plans get confounded and determination dies
There's no preparation and no guide
Just what you've done before here with your life
Acting on will, the test is the reaction
Opening your heart, the test is the emotion
Rolling the dice, the test is the agility
Burning out your mind, the test is the recovery

You can play by the rules, or bend 'em to your needs
But the test isn't over til you've reached your dark eternal sleep
There are no absolutes, no big wheel in the sky
You don't have to be first, you just gotta somehow get by

DREAM OF UNITY

I had a dream of Unity
Where we would work side by side
But today I see that it's only me
Just trying to get by
Sometimes we strive, undeterred
To walk as one toward our goal
But as people stray toward more selfish ways
We see we have no control

ITS RECIPROCAL

Hoarding turns allure to discontent
Altruism's a grind all its own
Mourning makes you know your inner self

But love is just as pure as you both
It's Reciprocal
When two love it's metaphysical
Venal desires we learn to beset
You and Me we've got our special thing
But I want you to never forget
It's Reciprocal
Each bedtime I Stir with regret Guilty
and vane Hoping for ret(ribution)
Charity's immune from my demands
I don't expect a thing from the weak
But You my love are measured and
compared
Predisposed to my profane decree

DETAILS ON GRAFFIN

Every year the intellectual fashion magazine Details magazine puts out a special issue that deals with musicians and musical topics. Guess what it's called: the annual "music issue". Well, in July, 1996 this issue hit the newsstands and contained an article about Bad Religion. More specifically, it focused on the life of Greg Graffin and particularly the last 16 years, or half of his lifetime, as a punker. It is reprinted here (without any permission from Details; we hope they don't care, it's been 9 months) as a service to those who might not have seen the issue, and because it is relevant to the band's newsletter recipients. It is the first time any autobiographical sketch has been printed about Bad Religion. The version that follows is the original, unedited copy, the one that appeared in Details was cut down in size to fit the magazine's word-limit.

A PUNK SYNOPSIS

(Details called it "Anarchy in the 10th Grade")

About two weeks ago I received a letter from a punker who said he used to be a fan of Bad Religion. "Used to be", that is, until we let him down by releasing our

last two albums which didn't fit his definition of punk. There weren't any songs against the establishment, he claimed (which isn't true by the way), so how can you call it Bad Religion? "Indeed how can you guys call yourself punk?" He went on to imply that we don't know anything about what punk is because we are so "out of it". He was clearly angry, and intolerant of what our recent music actually had to say. He believed that the sanctity of the punk establishment had been infringed on somehow by our last two albums (but he also noted that our previous seven albums weren't guilty of such treason).

The very same day I ran into someone on the street in the town where I live and he recognized me as the singer of Bad Religion. Like the guy who sent me the letter, he too was a punker, but he wasn't angry or judgmental. We talked for a short while and he spoke about how increasingly these days young people in general are hostile to strangers, and don't want to listen to anyone but their own comfortable circle of friends. And about how people seem to be motivated these days by some unseen force to be closed minded. His open desire for opinion, and his focus on relevant issues were refreshing and it made me remember all the great things about the punkers I grew up with and still interact with today: open-minded, inclusive, unpretentious and not presumptuous, and willing to confront the people or institutions that seemed unfair or unjust. Instead of being concerned with establishing an institution within which we could exclude others (which, sadly, is what many punkers really want), we were interested in including people who felt estranged by, or disillusioned with their social surroundings.

In that one day I experienced some

of the best things about punk, the traits exhibited by the kid on the street, and the worst things about punk: the negative, self-righteous, dogmatic thinking of the kid who wrote the letter. Both of them were self-acknowledged punkers yet they were from almost opposite ideological poles. For 16 years now I have been a member of this strange sub-culture, and I have come to realize that there are both liberal and conservative wings of it. In that sense it is a microcosm of society in general.

It is an inane task to try and define punk universally. Its meaning is fuzzied everywhere by contextual circumstance. A 16 year-old girl from an affluent religious family who consistently shows up to church on Sunday with her green mohawk and "Fuck Jesus" shirt is punk. But so is a 42 year old biology professor who claims that Charles Darwin's ideas were wrong. Neither person has ever heard of, nor met, one another, nor hung out together at the same underground club. And yet their challenge to established institutions and revulsion to dogmatic thinking links them spiritually. Whether this is genetic or learned is unknown. But I too feel a kinship with everyone who shares these traits. I don't feel allied with those who are exclusive, elitist, and who think that their way of life is a model for how others should live theirs. My philosophy was instilled by the open minded thinking of my parents of course, but also through the turmoil I experienced growing up. While I realize many kids had it harder than me, I have found that a lot of people who call themselves punks had similar experiences.

In 1976, At the age of 11 I moved with my mom and brother to the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles. Like millions of other victims of divorce in the 1970s I had to deal with the fact that my

father was now living far away (in Racine, Wisconsin) and I would not get to see him as much as most other kids see theirs. This pain was compounded by the bewildering alienation I felt as a Wisconsin boy at Junior High School in the Los Angeles unified school district. I had entered a landscape unlike anything I experienced in my 11 years of life. I had dark brown fluffy, wavy hair, unfeatherable, impossible to mold into the cool rock-and-roll hairdos of the 1970s that were so popular. I wore velour kids shirts from K-Mart, and corduroys and because they were less expensive than jeans and we didn't have a lot of money. I had cheap shoes, usually also from K-Mart or Payless, always worn out, with goofy logos that emulated the real popular brands that all the other kids wore. I rode a Sears 10-speed that was heavy, sluggish, and couldn't jump or skid. I had a powder blue, plastic skateboard with noisy, open-bearing wheels, totally unfit for the skateboard parks that were so popular in southern California. I had never been to the beach in my life, and thought of it as a place to go swimming, not as a symbol for a way of life. People asked me "dude!.....do you party?" I thought of our annual kids new year's parties back home in Racine. We stayed up past midnight and ate ice cream and soda, but other than those I didn't have much experience throwing parties. It took me about six months to realize that party was a synonym of getting high. I saw fellow 7th graders come to class with squinty eyes and euphoric smiles reeking of pot smoke (at first I didn't know what that smokey odor was). Fellow classmates in "shop-class" had secretive projects that they brought out only when the teacher, Mr. Feers, took his cigarette break. Their works consisted of salvaged polyurethane cylinders, sealed at the bottom, sanded smooth around the top,

and a few 1/4 inch holes quickly forged on the drill-press. I was bewildered when one of them asked me: "dude!....check out my bong, isn't it bitchin'?" Not only did I not know what a bong was....I didn't understand the adjective he used to describe it, nor why he was hiding it. All I knew was that there was some weird secret about all this, and I was not one of those who were welcome to the information. Kids moved up the social ladder by revealing their knowledge of rock and roll culture and sharing their covert collections of black beauties, Quaaludes, and joints. If you partook in their offers, you were one of them, a trusted confidant. If you were afraid to partake, you were a second-class loser. In other words, if you went along with the flow, unquestioning and complacent, you were accepted and rewarded with social status. If you questioned the norm, or went against the grain in any way, you were in for a rocky ride down the social ladder.

I shriveled under this pressure. Unable to compete yet unwilling to shut down, I came to be friends with a particular class of people who were labeled geeks, nerds, kooks, dorks, wimps, and pussies (or "wussies" if you combine these last two). We hung out together and did creative things after school, but the greatest alleviation of my suffering came from music. We had an old spinet piano that I would bang on and sing songs I learned by ear. I desired to gain a musical identity just like my peers at school, but I wasn't inspired by the bands that formed the fabric of this burn-out drug culture: Led Zeppelin, Rush, Kiss, Journey, Foreigner, Styx, Ted Nugent, Bad Company, Lynard Skynard among many others. Luckily, by the time I was 14, I had discovered a radio show on Saturday and Sunday nights that showcased local bands

from L.A. I discovered the station because it was the only one in L.A. that played Todd Rundgren from time to time. My friend in Wisconsin and I had grown to love Todd and Utopia because they were melodic rock, but somewhat beneath the mainstream of popular music. Those characteristics still appeal to me today, and often guide my preferences for other bands.

I cannot overstate the importance of that radio show in the development of my musical personality. It was called Rodney on the Roq (on station KROQ) and it proved that there was an entire community of people right there in the same city that used music to share their alienation and confusion about the culture around them. It also proved that you didn't have to be a virtuoso or signed to a major record label in order to be played over the airwaves. The actual recordings were not slick high-budget productions. Often times Rodney would simply play demo tapes, or acetate pressings (limited-use vinyl singles or e.p.s). It was gloriously vulgar, and inspiring in its simplicity.

I wanted to be part of this community of musicians. The music was heartfelt and desperate. It spoke of the suffering that comes from the pressure to conform, and the burden that is placed on us by those in power, and the celebration of belonging to a community of powerless misfits. yet it was delivered by such a variety of bands, from different backgrounds. I "went punk" at 15. I cut my wavy hair very short, dyed it pitch black, and made my own t-shirts. I was creative enough and over the years I had experimented with songwriting on the piano along with my friends playing pots and pans and using cheap tape recorders. We were determined to send in a tape to Rodney on the Roq. But before any of that

could materialize, I was introduced by a fellow wussie to the guys who would become Bad Religion. By the end of that same year, 1980, I had made my first record and Rodney played it. Usually this would make anyone a hero at his high school, a veritable recording artist as a classmate! But my high-school peers were violently opposed to this new evolving subculture. It was not the kind of music that glorified sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. It wasn't "mellow" and it didn't inspire people to get "wasted". I was seen as an enemy of their way of life. There were three of us at the school who were punkers. And all three of us at one time or another were physically beaten by people at school who attacked us only because of our musical preference. This scared me and at the same time made me feel powerful. It made me realize how frail most of the conformists really were, how easily they could be pushed to the point where they lose control. I found great solace in the community of other punkers from different schools, all with similar stories of oppression and abuse. My house became a hang-out and our garage became a rehearsal space (my mom was lenient, but also always at work, so there was no adult intervention). I began to feel like there was a way to deal with the disillusion of my cultural surroundings. But it was through questioning and challenging, not conforming and accepting.

This stance probably made me more insightful about human social interaction, and a better critic; but it also made me more cynical, and less understanding of those close to me who weren't punk, and therefore it definitely retarded my ability to have intimate relationships. We punkers were linked by what we thought was a deeper cause, our desire to overcome societal pressure. It was a tacit assumption

that we all had the same feelings, because we were all treated similarly by our society. The emphasis was always on the collective turmoil of our group and not on individual personal issues (there were a lot more songs about "us", "our", and "we" than about "I", "mine", and "me"). Maybe this is why so many of my friends got hooked on hard drugs, and some killed themselves. My punk friends did not practice understanding, we only exhibited toleration.

This shortcoming naturally extended to the sexes. I just assumed that girls were equals on every level. They dressed similarly, had similar hairstyles, and even slam-danced with us boys. Their suffering was our suffering, it seemed to me. I never thought that maybe they saw the punk scene from a unique perspective. "Women's issues" were not on our discussion agenda. Both sexes were too busy being stalwart, and tough. It was wonderfully equal, and I was proud of my egalitarian view of the sexes. Unfortunately, it was also an excuse not to address differences between the sexes. To this day, I am great at being tolerant with women's expressions, but bad at understanding their needs. And the time with my male friends is spent talking about mundane issues or worldly problems, not personal desires or feelings. This has interfered with numerous close friendships, and it has undermined my ability to be a good husband.

I decided to go to college. I anticipated that it would be a place where dissenting voices were recognized and applauded. This romantic vision appealed to me. I loved playing in my band and contributing to the challenge of mainstream music, but I also wanted more. I felt an urge to question more of society than just the music scene and people's fashions. I

figured that I could play in the band on weekends and vacations, and I could write about the relevant issues I was discussing at the university. But I realize now, in retrospect, that the university was as replete with the pressure to conform as my high school was. Students were rewarded for thinking like the professor. Only rarely did the professors try to educe original ideas from the students. More often we were rewarded for regurgitating the same rhetoric on tests that they professed in the lectures, which were more like state-of-the-union addresses in any given discipline. Although I was lucky enough to find three wonderful and inspiring faculty advisors who praised my originality and made me feel smarter than I probably am, I was saddened that there were so few like them. I became acutely aware that the usual university experience for most students was one of indoctrination into the prescriptive thinking of a privileged society. It was a recipe for what was acceptable to society. And nowhere in that socialization process did they provide a troubleshooting guide to deal with alternative ways of thinking. As a result, my undergraduate G.P.A. was only slightly better than average. But thanks to my advisors strong recommendations and insistence that I had original research ideas, I was able to continue and receive a Master of Science degree in Geology. I went on to a Ph.D. program too. Both of my higher-degree programs have taught me that the way to succeed in our society is to walk that fragile line between understanding the dogma that is inherent in the prevailing ideology and showing the people in power that you have your own ideas too but are not willing to infringe on their tolerance. Originality has a low tolerance threshold.

Over the last year and one-half I

have been privileged enough to travel with more than most people do in a life-time. As I became more worldly, I realized that at every level of society and culture there are teachings that dictate how people are supposed to behave, and that in some way or another control people's freedom to express themselves and live happy lives. I feel that it is the gift of being human to be able to challenge and confront those tenets, and share new ways to evoke originality from others. I'm glad that I'm not an animal.

Today, I have a more sophisticated view of my social surroundings. I have children, I own a house, I have insurance, I make financial decisions. My insight into the world comes from disparate sources: geology, organismic biology, music, travel, and fatherhood. This plurality insures my individuality. And learning to be an individual was the best gift I got from growing up punk. I am conscious of stereotypes, and try not to fit them. No geologist I have met is also knowledgeable about the music business and likewise no musician I know understands earth history like I do. I am proud of this unpredictable uniqueness.

Strangely, punk is quickly becoming mainstream. Last year, more people bought punk rock records, tapes, CDS, t-shirts, stickers, and show tickets, than ever before.

As in any capitalistic situation, the punk market is experiencing a focal shift away from the original intent of the art (or product) toward the creation of a credo or indoctrination surrounding the marketing of the product. Why else would entire music labels market themselves as "punk labels"? Because they are selling fashion and building a sub-cultural retinue instead of promoting honesty and creativity of its artists. This is a sad state of affairs in the music industry

that occurs at the independent-label level as well as in the majors. Therefore, it is no wonder that there are a bunch of "punk police" out there monitoring whether bands like ours fit the stereotype, and match their dogmatic view of acceptability. They exhibit the same behavior as the academic clones who graduate by the thousands each spring, ready to discriminate against others who challenge their learned ideology. The letter I received two weeks ago from that disgruntled fan was sadly reminiscent of the persecution I felt in high school from the stoners. It is also a shining example of how easy it is to follow the party line and advocate unoriginal, thoughtless sentiments, which in turn motivates me all the more to provoke.

...PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION EVERY FOUR YEARS....

This year's election got me thinking. Very few of us think about why we vote. This year I couldn't help but think about it. It provoked me to write the following short essay:

A COMMENT ON RESPONSIBLE VOTING, AND A PROTOCOL FOR A USEFUL VOTE:

By Greg Graffin

Voting is a privilege. As such it requires responsibility. Irresponsibility when coupled with licence can lead to social tragedy. If one is to feel good about his or her vote, it is necessary to have an agenda to use as justification, and also to adhere to some sort of ideological protocol for casting a particular vote. Too often in the past, our generation has voted and formed opinion based on self-serving interests. "I

know what is good for me, and I don't really care about what is good for others, I will vote for the candidate or issue that benefits me the most" is a common way of thinking. This is an example of the simplest possible voting convention. It doesn't require much worldly knowledge or social concern, it is simply a selfish desire for personal gain. This will probably typify most people's thinking on their way to the polls this year, as it has in years past. But it does not make for a better society. Voting offers us a way to responsibly improve society. If you don't care about such a goal, then voting isn't a privilege for you, its just a routine behavior that happens every four years, or worse, a way to implement evil policies that further degrade the lives of the careless and powerless. If you don't care about improvement, you better hope that those who do go to the polls advocate your interests.

Societal improvement is a somewhat nebulous concept because change is rarely teleological and it rests in the whims of the populace. Most people think that a candidate who wins an election can make the world a better place. This has rarely happened in history. It is the people, or the ruled, who make the world a better place by behavioral changes, and the ruler is usually only a by-product of this collective phenomenon. The process of voting, because it demands sharing of information, requires people to gain knowledge about their world. It offers an opportunity to question whether they accept the tenets of their representatives and of their society. When this occurs, people get informed, people can communicate their distastes, and their hopes. They feel useful and acknowledged by their fellow citizens. And through communication comes action, and eventual abatement of the stigmas that

cause suffering and misery. An informed person is a content person. An informed society is a strong society, supportive of its citizens, aware of, and compassionate to those less advantaged. Finally, an informed vote is a responsible vote. It goes far beyond the election in question. The knowledge is carried through the life of the possessor, and it shapes the way that person views his/her position in society and communicates with others. All of this is a contribution to a better community and a more meaningful election.

AN UNORTHODOX PROTOCOL FOR CASTING A MEANINGFUL VOTE:

1. Determine whether you care about the general well-being of society (If you do not, skip to step 7, if you do, continue on)
2. Determine whether you are a privileged citizen (If you are not, then proceed to step number 6, if you are, read steps 3, 4, and 5 only)
3. Examine **not** how well you will fare if a given issue is voted into law, but how poorly the under-privileged will suffer (no matter which laws pass a vote or who is voted into office, you will probably always still be better off than the people you fear you'll become, namely the under-privileged).
4. Create an ideological balance-sheet that details how much better you will fare, as a percentage of your current comfort level, versus how much worse the under-privileged will drop in their current comfort level (for instance, as a very banal example, a mere 2% drop in your current income, could provide a tremendous relative rise in an under-privileged household's

income).

5. Vote for the issue or candidate that promises to balance the disparity between the privileged and the under-privileged classes, even if it doesn't make you richer or if it provides a small compromise in your day-to-day comfort.
6. Vote for the issue or the candidate who will make your life better.
7. Abstain from voting

Finally, remember voting started out as a way for concerned citizens to play a role in creating a society that was good for all. Over time it evolved into the monstrosity it is today which is no more than a vehicle for selfish partisanism, and worse, a voice for those who want the law to preserve and increase the disparity between needy and privileged.

This unfortunate turn of events has made us a hostile, hopeless people. We should remember that history is relevant, and can help us gain a perspective on our current situation. NO civilization persists without a strong sense of social welfare. The British empire expired once its subjects learned that through unity and enlightenment of the underprivileged came a new power structure and a new sense of national community, one strong enough to turn away any possible oppressors. We are headed in the same direction as the failed British empire as our privileged class increases in wealth yet shrinks in population, and our underclass grows in population and shrinks in wealth.

Your vote is meaningless if it merely bolsters the selfish desires of a small privileged minority of citizens. A meaningful vote depends on the passage of issues or election of candidates that help to create a better scene for everyone, not merely the

rich elite, and not merely provisional support for the poor. If you follow these guidelines, we will have a less polarized, more enthusiastic underclass, and a less greedy, more compassionate upper class; and the quality of our social fabric will be drastically enhanced.

OLD LYRICS

In our continuing serial column we present lyrics to old songs, and sometimes newer songs that appeared on non-traditional releases.

PART III, off of the album "How could Hell be any Worse" 1982

The final page is written in the books of history

As man unleashed his deadly bombs, and sent troops overseas

To fight a war that can't be won and kills the human race

A show of greed and ignorance

Man's quest for dominance

They say when a mistake is made a lesson has been learned

But this time there's no second chance

The hate engulfs the world

A million lives are lost each day

A city slowly burns

A mother holds her dying child

And no one is concerned

MARKOVIAN PROCESS, off of the album "Stranger than Fiction" (European, and Japanese releases), 1994

You will all say that I am surely crazy

Only an unrepentant pessimist who's views

should be restrained

But facts are sterile, not vulgar nor sublime

And they're not religion they're for everyone

And signify the times

Today is a window, tomorrow the landscape

All you need to do is take a look outside

To know what we're bound to face

The level of disparity, the common man

The manner of destruction of the native land

The poverty of reprisal for all involved

And the scathing trajectory from the past

Markovian Process lead us not in vain

Prove to our descendants what we did to them

Then make us go away

MAIL

We love the mail we get, we read the mail we love. And some of it we don't love ends up in our "Johnny More Punk than You" section of the newsletter. We publish the letters that raise issues of a general interest regarding the band.

This issue however, is a little sparse on mail because we have been traveling so much that we haven't had a chance to carefully browse our mail. Here are a few letters that caught our attention:

In southern California, Dr. Strange publishes a catalog of punk music. He says that as long as a band stays on an indie label, that band will forever remain "punk". My example to contradict this statement is Rancid. Your opinion on Rancid may differ from mine but this is my letter ... so there....It seems that Bad Religion (while on a major) is still playing good punk music but Rancid (while on an indie) is now playing radio-pop-rock-and-roll music with a little ska and maybe one punk song. I believe Bad Religion should not be getting all the bad

press from Dr. Strange because BR will always be more punk than Lint's mohawk and Lars' middle finger.

Art B., Ridgecrest, CA

Art brings up the crucial question. No not whether a band is good or bad or even punk, but whether a distributor or any retailer should discriminate against groups because of the label that merely markets and sells their music. It is good that retailers have certain criteria that distinguish their products, but the label it appears on is not one of them. Rather, listening to, and being knowledgeable about the quality and integrity of the music one sells is a much better criterion to base a judgement.

Taste is taste however, and you can't take that away from anyone.

You may be interested to know that there exists a GRAFFIN7@AOL.COM and also a Graffin@Aol.com Both post to the Bad Religion mailing list. (Are there five other Graffins between those two? And are those five all relatives of yours?) As you can see, some fans take hero worship to extremes of the sort you'd only find in a technologically-advanced, icon-obsessed fin-de-siecle society like our own. Joe C. via hookup.net e-mail transmission

Graffin is a pretty unusual name, and I come from a small family with no known cousins who share my last name. Since it's such a rare name it might be a good internet identifier particularly if your name is Smith or Brown or Johnson or Wong in which case I give full permission to use it.

Greg,

Are you intrigued by Ted Kaczynski (the unabomber) at all? Having read some of his manifesto, I can relate to some of his ideas. I

know that blowing up random people is not a good thing, and what he did won't change anything for anybody other than the victims and their families and friends, but, I sometimes feel that individuals (humans) are expendable if it is for the good of the whole cause. Carefully selected individuals. The people who are the cause the destruction of the rain forests, and obviously the deaths and suffering of other lives (human or otherwise). I also know that this will not save the world, but maybe if it saved somebody or something. Is it worth it? Who knows? I am just curious about your thoughts on him. I was also wondering if you actually "practice what you preach"?

Alex, from aol.com, via e-mail

Dear Alex, I have not read anything by him. I think anyone who bombs people without giving them any warning is a coward of the lowest degree. That seriously undermines anything he has to say, no matter how lucid. He doesn't deserve to have a voice. Nor do any terrorists. I can appreciate your disgust with people who terrorize the rainforests and other ecosystems, I too am angered by it. But killing key people will not reverse the course of mankind. In fact, killing each other is the very same destructive instinct that we have to get away from if we can ever hope to preserve our ecosystems. Changing political policies, or ousting bad leaders is only a temporary, unsatisfying fix, not the fundamental kind of change that we need..."what we do need is a change of ideas".

I mean everything I say and I practice what I expect from others.

Sincerely,
Greg Graffin

FINALLY

If you have any problems getting the new live album (tested) from your independent

record stores, you can order one directly from us for \$13.00. Please make checks payable to:

Ancient Chinese Secret
c/o Bad Religion
137 W. 14th Street Suite 202
New York, NY 10011

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should be up and running efficiently and reliably within the next couple of weeks. You may have noticed if you sent us mail in the past that sometimes your messages would be returned. This is because our mail server would not operate 24/7/365 all the time. It required an office administrator to monitor it and we didn't have one. Now the mail system is being made more reliable and hopefully less labor intensive. In today's world, it should be simple to have a carefree e-mail server, but as in many areas of life, this too is more an ideal than a reality...the internet still has a long way to evolve before it is the first-choice medium for communications.

THE GRAY RACE TOUR

In 1996 BR traveled more than ever before. We played more shows than ever before, and played in front of more people than ever before. It is likely that you had more of a chance to see us in concert last year than ever before also.

Every time we play a show in a new geographic region we leave with a great sense of accomplishment, especially if the show was sold-out (which was the case in