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#23

Bad Religion

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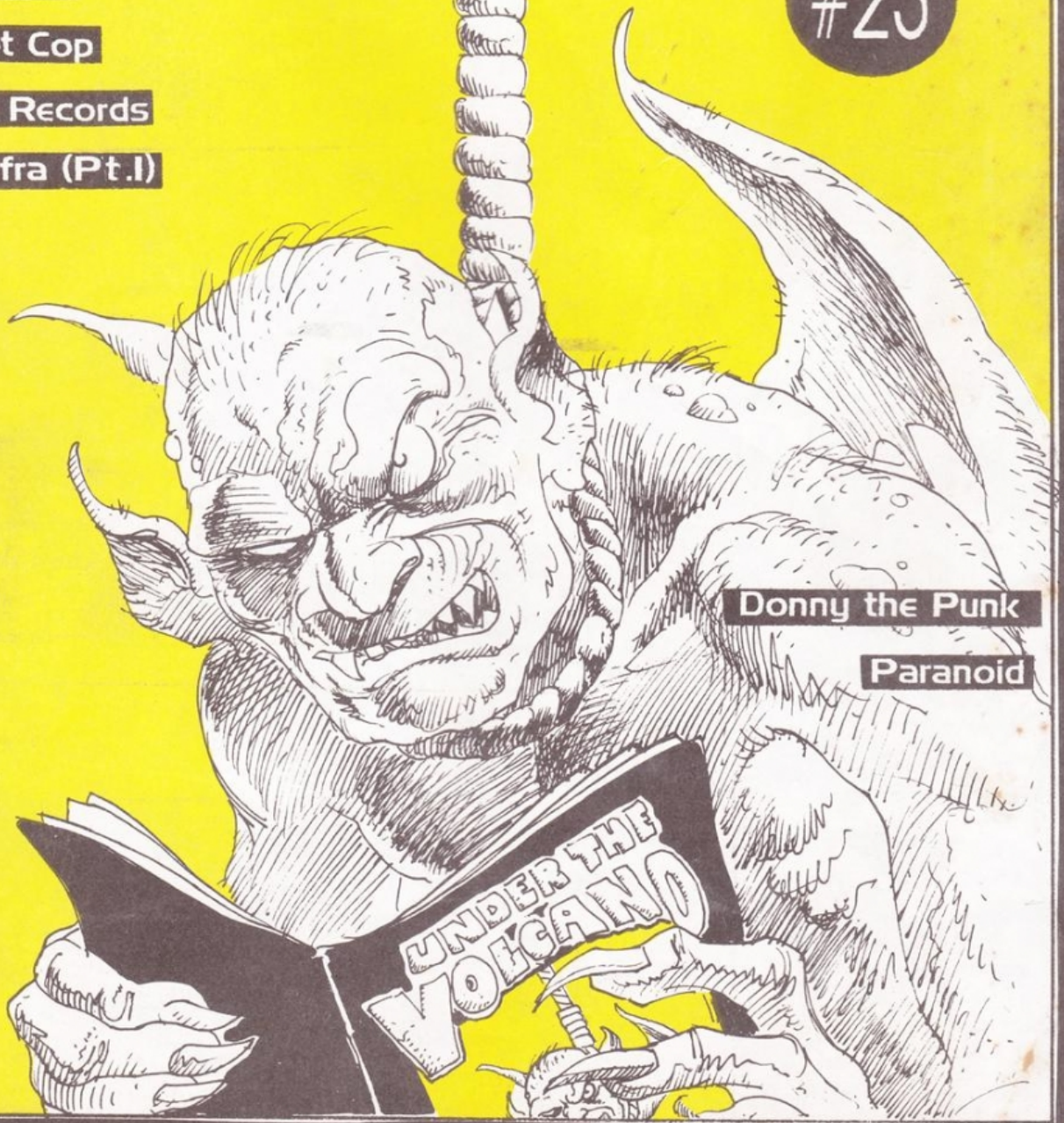
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BAD RELIGION

by VINNY

*I interviewed Bobby Schayer (drums) and Greg Hetson (guitar) of Bad Religion at the swank Drake Hotel in NYC recently. For all you new-jacks who think that Green Day is the "be-all, end-all" of punk rock, LA's Bad Religion have been around since '80 and have been putting out some of the best hardcore records ever, the latest being *Stranger Than Fiction* on Atlantic. I know the guys in the band like sports, hockey in particular, so that's where I started the interview. -Vinny*

Under the Volcano: Okay, the first question is a sports related question. If you had to compare the band to one hockey player, who would you compare Bad Religion to?

Greg Hetson: Umm... You have to give me a minute...It has to be someone that has speed and a little agility, but is rough around the edges as well...Okay, Jeremy Roenick. I think Roenick's good, yeah, he's got his own skills, but he'll go in there and pass if he has to.

UTV: If you took everybody in the band and put them on a hockey team, who would be what? Who's the goaltender?

Greg Hetson: Jay [Bentley].

UTV: Center?

Greg Hetson: We'll put [Greg] Graffin at center.

UTV: Left wing, right wing?

Greg Hetson: I'd play the right wing, [to Bobby] do you want to play defense or left-wing?

Bobby Schayer: Defense.

Greg Hetson: Defense...we'll but Bobby back there and Brian on the other wing.

UTV: What was the LA punk scene like way back?

Greg Hetson: 1980?

UTV: Yeah, '79, '80.

Greg Hetson: It was thriving but it was really diverse. You had bands like The Germs and Black Flag, but then you also had bands like Wall Of Voodoo, Plimsouls. If you weren't a metal or rock band, the only place that you could play was a punk club; even Dwight Yokum would play the punk clubs...it was just the fact that there were so many clubs at the time, and there were so many different types of bands, different kinds of music going on that the feel was great. You could see five different bands in one night; that made it really exciting.

UTV: How is it different today? How would you compare 1994 to 1980, in general?

Bobby Schayer: It's too categorized I think.



Hetsen in action

There's thrash, there's thrash/metal, there's death metal, there's speed metal...

Greg Hetson: Grindcore...

Bobby Schayer: There's hardcore...

UTV: But, do you feel also like it's on a different level now with bands like Green Day?

Bobby Schayer: Well, it's bands like Green Day... it's a lot of the stuff that kids weren't listening to fifteen years ago...I think it's great because we were all sitting around thinking "Wouldn't it be great if there was Punk band on the radio?" Greg put it best when he said that a lot of A&R people now were either punks then, or they were seeing those bands then.

Greg Hetson: The people that were in the punk scene then are now working at the labels, or working at radio, so I think that's a major reason why you're getting this phenomenon.

UTV: When you guys signed to Atlantic I know that Brett didn't really want to, but was there anybody else in the band?

Greg Hetson: That's what he says now; he didn't say it then.

UTV: In other words, everybody was just like, "This is what we're gonna do?"

Greg Hetson: Yeah, well we thought about it and weighed our options and went with it, yeah.

UTV: Comparing Atlantic and Epitaph, aside from the obvious things, what are a couple big differences?



Brian Baker

Greg Hetson: Distribution...Getting in to all the major stores, all the major chains, and even places that we couldn't get into before. It was really hard to find Bad Religion records, you can find 'em now. Certain chains in the Midwest and

the South, where before you'd really have to go out of your way...Plus they rented a nice suite for interviews...[laughs]

UTV: So generally, right now everything is cool with Atlantic?

Bobby Schayer: Yeah. We just did a tour of Europe for six weeks, we're on Sony in Europe, and everything went great, everything was done really well...

UTV: Was this European tour you just did different from any of the other tours? I mean, did you play the same venues? What was different, if anything?

Bobby Schayer: Bigger venues.

UTV: Oh really? Even bigger venues than usual?

Greg Hetson: We just played Sweden for the first time, and the majority of the venues, they had to change to bigger venues. They went from 1,500 seats to 3,000 seats. We also had Green Day playing on the bill though.

UTV: And they were opening for you?

Greg Hetson: Yeah.

UTV: Well, I know Pearl Jam opened for you guys two years ago in Europe.

Greg Hetson: Yeah, if you open for Bad Religion you get big! [laughs]

UTV: So what's it like playing with Brian [Baker, on guitar]?

Bobby and Greg: Great!

UTV: There was a completely smooth turnover, no difference?

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Greg Hetson: When he came in the band it was automatic, real quick. It was kind of like when Bobby stepped in after Peter [Finestone] quit. It was like, "Okay, great, no need to worry, he knows the shit."

UTV: Regarding *Recipe For Hate*, musically you guys wandered on the usual. Why?

Greg Hetson: Who knows? It just happens sometimes. You just aren't focused, maybe a little rushed recording it or getting the songs together. **UTV:** You guys weren't trying to smooth out the sound or anything, no conscious reason?

Not sure who: No, just doing different things. The record came out on Epitaph; we didn't record it for Atlantic, we recorded it for Epitaph. They [Atlantic] just took it over.

UTV: So what made you go back? It's obvious that *Stranger Than Fiction* is you guys going back into the fold again.

Greg Hetson: We knew we were gonna be scrutinized, looked under the microscope signing to the major. "Oh well, that's it for them, they're gone!"

UTV: I'm sure that everyone is asking questions about you signing. Are you getting tired of it?

Greg Hetson: Yeah, but you just deal with it.

Bobby Schayer: If you want to get really technical and nit-picky, I think once you play a gig and earn money you're not an artist anymore, you're a sell-out. It's not an art, it's a business, nit-picking in over-simplistic terms.

UTV: What about Andy Wallace? Whose decision was that to bring him in to produce?

Bobby Schayer: All of us.

Greg Hetson: Ours.

UTV: That wasn't something that Atlantic was behind?

Greg Hetson: No. They suggested some producers, and most of 'em it was like "Forget it."

UTV: Did you guys just decide at first you wanted to bring somebody else in?

Greg Hetson: Yeah, we suggested we wanted to bring a producer in.

UTV: How come?

Bobby Schayer: To be able to sound good.

Greg Hetson: To get an outside interest, you know?

Bobby Schayer: I think it helped focus the band. He made us play a lot better, 'cause I think that when you produce yourself you can get a little lazy.

UTV: Maybe that's what happened on *Recipe*? You should have used a producer then, looking back?

Greg Hetson: Think so... Yeah.

Bobby Schayer: Yeah.

UTV: So in the next year or two, what are the plans? Is Graffin going back to teaching?

Bobby Schayer: Not as long as Bad Religion's busy. He's taken the time off.

Greg Hetson: We'll probably record again, once

it gets normal, maybe in the Summer we'll be recording again, maybe late Summer.

UTV: Do you have a lot of new stuff written?

Bobby Schayer: Not yet.

UTV: So you're not a band to write on the road. What do you do on the road to kill time?

Greg Hetson: It's not that much time really.

UTV: Well, when you have a twelve hour bus ride what do you do? Do you sleep?

Greg Hetson: You listen to music, you read, you watch videos, talk, whatever...

UTV: I noticed that Wayne Kramer played on the new record. How did that come about?

Bobby Schayer: He walked into Epitaph...

UTV: He just walked into Epitaph?

Bobby Schayer: Somehow, I guess the story was, he went into Epitaph and he brought his tape of music to Brett, and I guess that he was gonna do a record with Brett, and we were recording and Brett asked him to come down and play on the track and he did. He did great, he got it in one take. That's it.

UTV: And now I notice that Epitaph is going to put out his record...

Bobby Schayer: He's a really nice guy and very well respected.

UTV: Yeah, he played for the MCS, that's true...

Greg Hetson: And we're the bastard sons of the MCS, that's what Graffin would say. ■

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