

SUBURBAN VOICE

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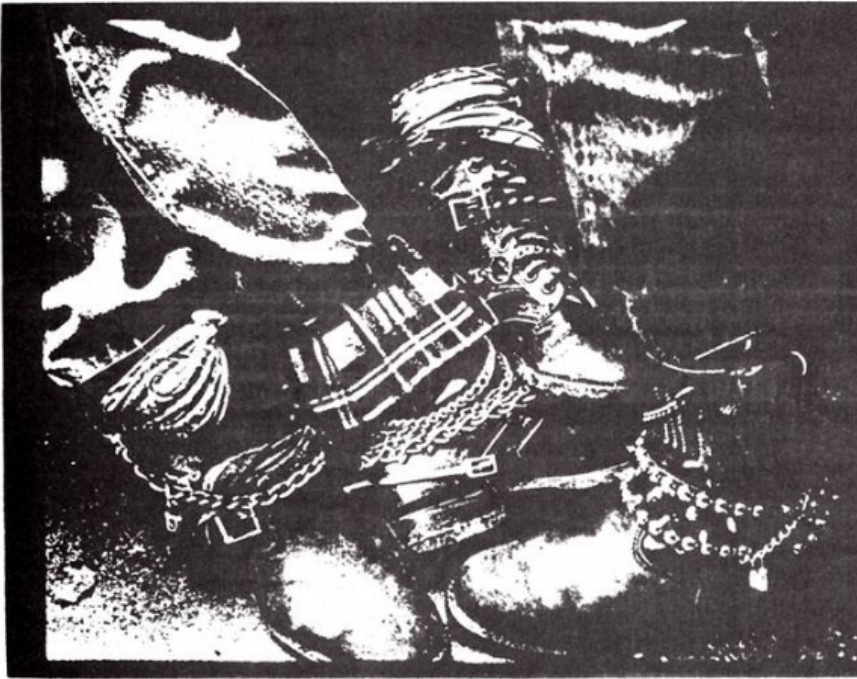
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BAD RELIGION



Bad Religion have signed to the evil corporate label, Atlantic, and there's question over whether that was a very "punk" thing to do. It hasn't changed their music, obviously—in fact, "Stranger Than Fiction" is a better album than "Recipe For Hate." So call 'em sell-outs or whatever...here's an interview with bassist Jay Bentley, conducted by Eric Bradford from *Thicker* 'zine. Brian Baker has replaced guitarist Brett Gurewitz in the band...

SV: I thought the new album was a lot better than the last one. I was just wondering if you approached the recording or the pre-production differently than the last one?

Jay: We had no pre-production on "Recipe" at all. We actually went into the studio and learned the songs. When we felt we had the songs well-enough, all the way through, we actually recorded it for the basic tracks. That was pretty much it. There wasn't a whole lot of interpretation between the guitars and bass and drums and it was pretty stagnant.

SV: Was there more time spent in the writing of the songs for this one?

Jay: I don't think there was more time spent in the writing, but I do think that there was a lot of time spent to get it, before we went in to record. Brett and I and Bobby and Greg Hetson and I and Bobby, we all were together, working on songs, maybe because we realized that "Recipe" was about as far-out as we wanted to go in terms of being really fucking lazy. (laughs)

SV: Was there a lot of pressure from Atlantic when you went in to do this?

Jay: No, not at all. They've seen us doing this the last fifteen years. They know that we know what we're doing.

SV: So was there internal pressure between you when you were writing the songs? Did you have this communal feeling that this record was going to get better distribution than any others, therefore, maybe we should really concentrate or whatever...

Jay: No, I would say that the biggest thought that probably came from Greg and Brett was that the feedback from "Recipe" was everyone thought it was light for Bad Religion, the guitars weren't as heavy. But I would attribute that more to the production than how we actually recorded it and I think, on this record, it was just a sense of where we are and we have something that we do very well, together. Maybe it was a couple of steps backwards to go more towards the "No Control," "Against The Grain" attitude.

SV: Do you think that was a result of reading the reviews from the last album?

Jay: No, I think that was kind of how we felt. When the record came out, we listened to it and just kind of said, 'boy, it just didn't really translate, did it?' It's so hard...that's why we hired Andy Wallace. Even though we've been producing our own records, there's people with multitudes more experience than we have, so they come in and they see things differently than you do and I think what we were trying to do was...somewhere along the line, we forgot how to do this and this guy knows how to do it better than we do.

SV: Why did you re-record "21st Century Digital Boy"?

Jay: A couple of years ago, I think it was during "Generator," Brett had mentioned that he wanted to re-do it, because he was unhappy with the production and how we played it on "Against The Grain," so he had been mentioning it and mentioning it, so we said, 'let's think about it' and, because it was mentioned, people started talking about and I think we did 19 songs on the record and that was one of them and when it came time to edit the record down to make what we think was a great Bad Religion record and not a lot of bullshit, that was one of the songs.

SV: Do you think it came out sounding substantially different?

Jay: Yeah, production-wise. Obviously, I going to have biased memories of what it was like when we originally recorded it and how the song made me feel, originally, but listening to it now, with different production and the different kick pattern and the things we did differently, we recorded it like we play it live, now.

SV: You're not working at Epitaph, anymore, but did you get any sense of how the people there, the workers, felt about you leaving and going to Atlantic?

Jay: Did I get sense of how they felt?

SV: Yeah. And how was that?

Jay: (laughs) I don't have any comment.

SV: OK...I asked that because I called them up last year and the guy found out that I write for *MRR* occasionally and I got like a half an hour spiel about it. He was saying something about how *MRR* condemns Epitaph, now, because they think they had something to do with your going to Atlantic and obviously they hate that. So he was saying, 'it has nothing to do with us, we're completely independent of that whole thing, we don't like it any more than anybody else.'

Jay: Yeah, whatever. It seems to me that, instead of everybody being forthright and honest about it, everybody's just trying to cover their butts and maintain their political correctness, which is bullshit all the way around, anyway. If people were honest and they didn't need to be judged and valued...that's kind of how I see the whole thing.

SV: So, the band, obviously, at this point is all that you do...

Jay: Yeah, this is a scary moment in the life of Jay.

SV: Oh, yeah. Why's that? You stand at the edge of the cliff, looking out into the abyss.

Jay: I am, too...

SV: Is this something you see yourself doing until you're 65 and able to collect Social Security?

Jay: No, I didn't see myself doing this past a year that we started doing this and I still don't see myself doing this for a year past now. (laughs). I'm trying not to make too many heavy bets on anything.

SV: What do you think you'd end up doing, if you weren't doing this?

Jay: I don't know. I'm thinking lawnmower repair man. It's kind of looking enticing to me. It seems pretty easy.

SV: Now wait, I remember from that video I saw about a year ago, you said you repaired motorcycles or something, on movie sets.

Jay: I did do that. But now I would go down to the two-stroke (?) motor, sharpen that blade, I'm set.

SV: Do you think that would be as rewarding as playing big punk rock?

Jay: If you do it good, people have respect for you!