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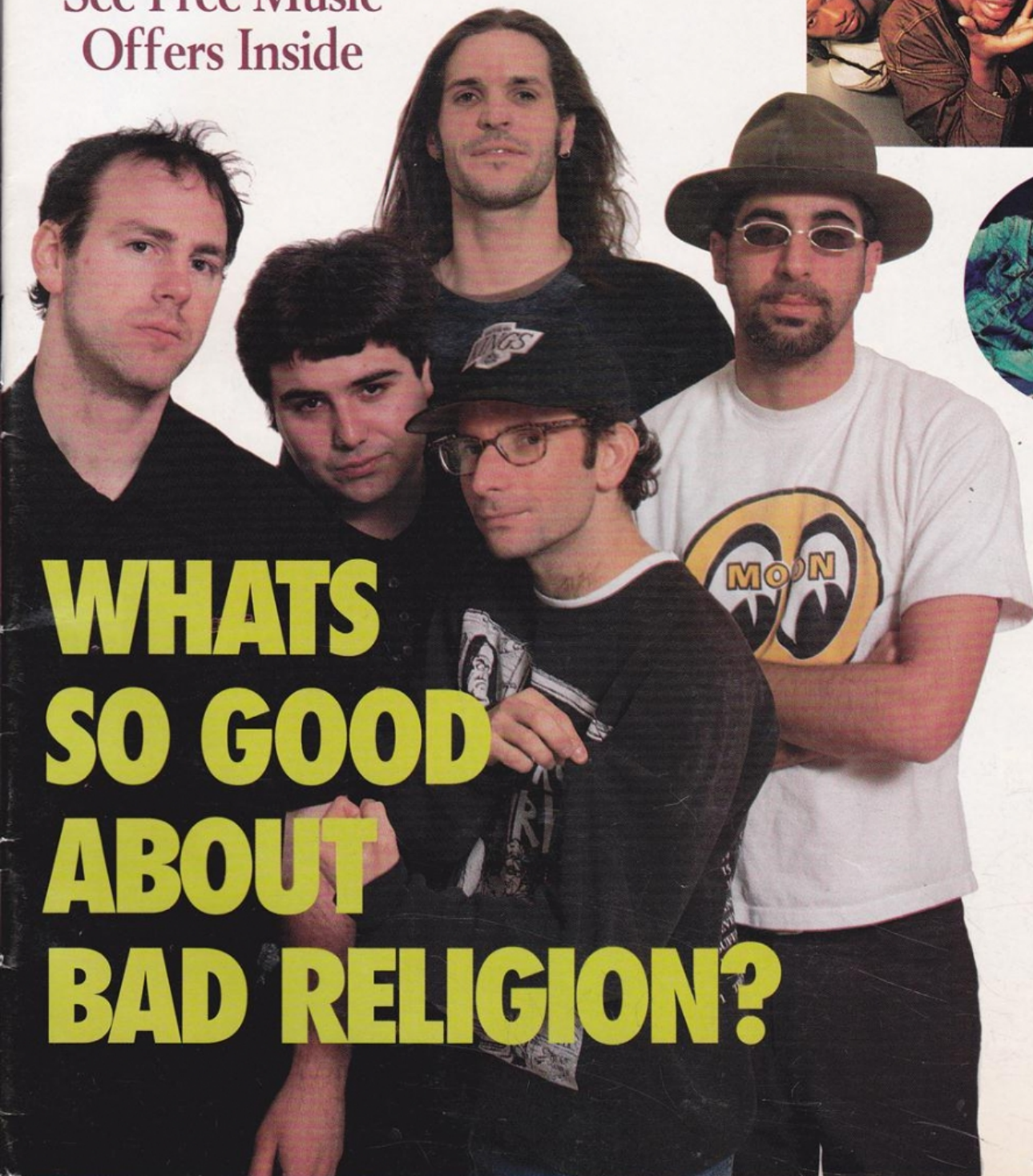
NEW REVIEW

of Records

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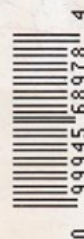
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WHATS SO GOOD ABOUT BAD RELIGION?

RADIO KFMDM



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The best Rock album of 1993 came out on two labels, the indie Epitaph and the major Atlantic. More than anything from Seattle, it signaled that the changes in the music industry towards more challenging music may be more than a passing fad. The record was *Recipe for Hate*; the band that made it, Bad Religion, is today's premier Punk band. From its first album, 1982's *How Could Hell Be Any Worse?*, all the way through *Recipe*, Bad Religion issued its records on its own label, Epitaph (becoming a huge

of the big statements came from Mr. Brett, as he's known. Not that Mr. Brett lacks a sense of fun: He gleefully related how the engine of his Corvette revs so low that he can ride through a parking garage and set off the other cars' alarms—his record at the time was five at once.

Religion:

BG: "Religion is a concept analogous to many other things, so it's also a common thread that pretty much has touched everyone's life who would ever listen to any record ever. So it's an effective



talking just the other day about how in the Old Testament, you know, when Moses freed the Jews, one of the things that expedited that process was the angel of death passing over all the homes and killing all the innocent first-born sons of the Egyptians. I don't care what the Egyptians did, it's not cool to kill their innocent sons! No matter what they did. And if Jehovah, the god of the Old Testament, thinks that's a cool thing to do, then I won't pray to him, 'cause that's fucked! I'm

GH: You have to have a whole third party controlling the legislature, 'cause the third party president wouldn't get anything through—look, Clinton's having a hard time!

BG: "I think we could motivate young people to think differently about their communities, and I think we could motivate young people to question the prefabricated value system that's fed to them like pablum through the television 24 hours a day. Hopefully one of them will be brilliant and ambitious and will organize

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT BAD RELIGION?

indie success story along the way and also putting out albums by Down By Law, L7, Dag Nasty, and others). All the band's albums are worth owning, starting with 80-85, which included all BR's recordings up to that point except the disowned second album *Into the Unknown*. Following a hiatus, '88's *Suffer* began BR's progression from a great Hardcore band to a more versatile but equally great Rock band (with harmony vocals and more varied tempos): '89's *No Control*, '90's *Against the Grain*, '92's *Generator*, and *Recipe*. And since this is not a band that'll compromise, this year's album is eagerly anticipated.

But this is an intelligent enough group that it merits coverage beyond the usual onslaught that promotes a new release. Since Graffin's in school, I talked to co-leader Brett Gurewitz and guitarist Greg Hetson, who's equally well-known for his time in the Circle Jerks. Most

topic. I think the Elton John record *Madman Across the Water* probably mentions Jesus something like 30 times, and it's a really great record, some of the best lyrics ever, something about it, I don't know why.

"Catholicism has a power structure similar to government structures. We try not to be too banal with it, 'cause I know that's been done to death. I don't think that's really the angle we usually go in. There's a song on *Recipe for Hate* called 'Skyscraper' which is an allegorical treatment of the story of the Tower of Babel. Not only have I never read anything like it in literature, but in music either.

"I don't think it's necessarily fair to say that we attack religion. I think it's a really good idea in pretty much all cases to be critical, even to the point of being somewhat cynical, and if something can stand up to your scrutiny, then go with it. We were

not even saying whether he exists or not, I can't say that, but you can look at things and say, if this is the case, then that's really fucked, that doesn't fly with me! And it's just good to do that! If everyone did that, we'd probably have a lot more freedom and a lot more harmony and a lot less misunderstanding and hatred and racism and sexism and everything wrong."

Politics:

BG: "Democrats have been just as fucked historically as Republicans. Look at the foreign policy record on Democrats. That's not to say I'm a conservative, I'm not, I'm way more liberal than the Democrat is. I think the only chance in hell that we're ever gonna have for any change is have a fucking third-party elected President. Not Ross Perot, mind you, but someone other than Republican or Democrat. They're all the same fucking people.

other young people to make some kind of a change either through politics or through urban terrorism. One or the other, I don't care. 'Kerosene' is about homeless people finally organizing and rising up against the government, you know. I think by and large there's a lot of problems and no one talks about them and no one acknowledges them, because even though we have freedom of expression here, the mass media which is so influential has this, like, code of ethics where you're allowed to criticize the government [but] stay within this realm of thinkable thought, and there are certain things that are unmentionable, and you can never really go outside of that kind of criticism, and I think through music and literature you can go way outside it, and I think you can be real inspirational, too."

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Bad Religion

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Epitaph A&R:

SH: "Do you just basically pick up stuff that you like?"

BG: "Well, no, I have other criteria as well, but if I tell you my criteria for signing bands, I'll get a whole slew of new demo tapes trying to fit that criteria. No, but seriously, usually the bands I sign are like people I knew, or people I know have friends who are bands, and they say, 'Hey, you should check out this band, they're really good.' I've never signed a band off a tape that came in. I would, and I will, but it just hasn't happened. The main thing about it, it has to be, when you put it in, it has to be very appealing, and then I look at the other factors also, like do I think that people will stay together, and will they tour, and..."

GH: "What kind of trousers they wear."

BG: "Yeah. If they dress cool, have cool hair..."

SH: "Any particular color you prefer?"

BG: "Well, blue is always a plus [he's got shockingly pale blue hair], but other than that, anything really cool would be good."

Mozart:

BG: "I love punk rock songs, but I can write them, so I don't have any mystery there. I want to know what it's like to write...god only knows."

GH: "Wouldn't you like

to be like Mozart or something?"

BG: "Mozart doesn't give me the goosebumps on the spine shit. You listen to [a rock song] and you go, *mmmph*. Like it hits that one point, like the end of the bridge going into final chorus, and this electric jolt goes through your toes and your neck, and you go, oh, what was that, and then all the hair on your arms standing up and this is a good song!"

GH: "I think it's more incredible to write a complete symphony, sitting there in the 1600s with a candle and a pen and a piece of paper, thinking this shit up in your head without the use of a four-track."

BG: "It is impressive, but if I could do that, it wouldn't help me get laid in the slightest."

GH: "Dude, this is the closest you are to getting laid tonight."

The meaning of Punk:

BG: "I was 18, and my mom was like, okay, he has a blue mohawk, it's just a phase. And I said, get away mom, it's not a phase. This is me, and if you don't like it, you don't like me, because this is how I am, and I'm never going to change. And of course, I'm 31, and it's true, I haven't changed since, so I'm only doing it to show my mom, so that's what Punk is, it's proving to your mom that she's wrong."

STEVE HOLTJE