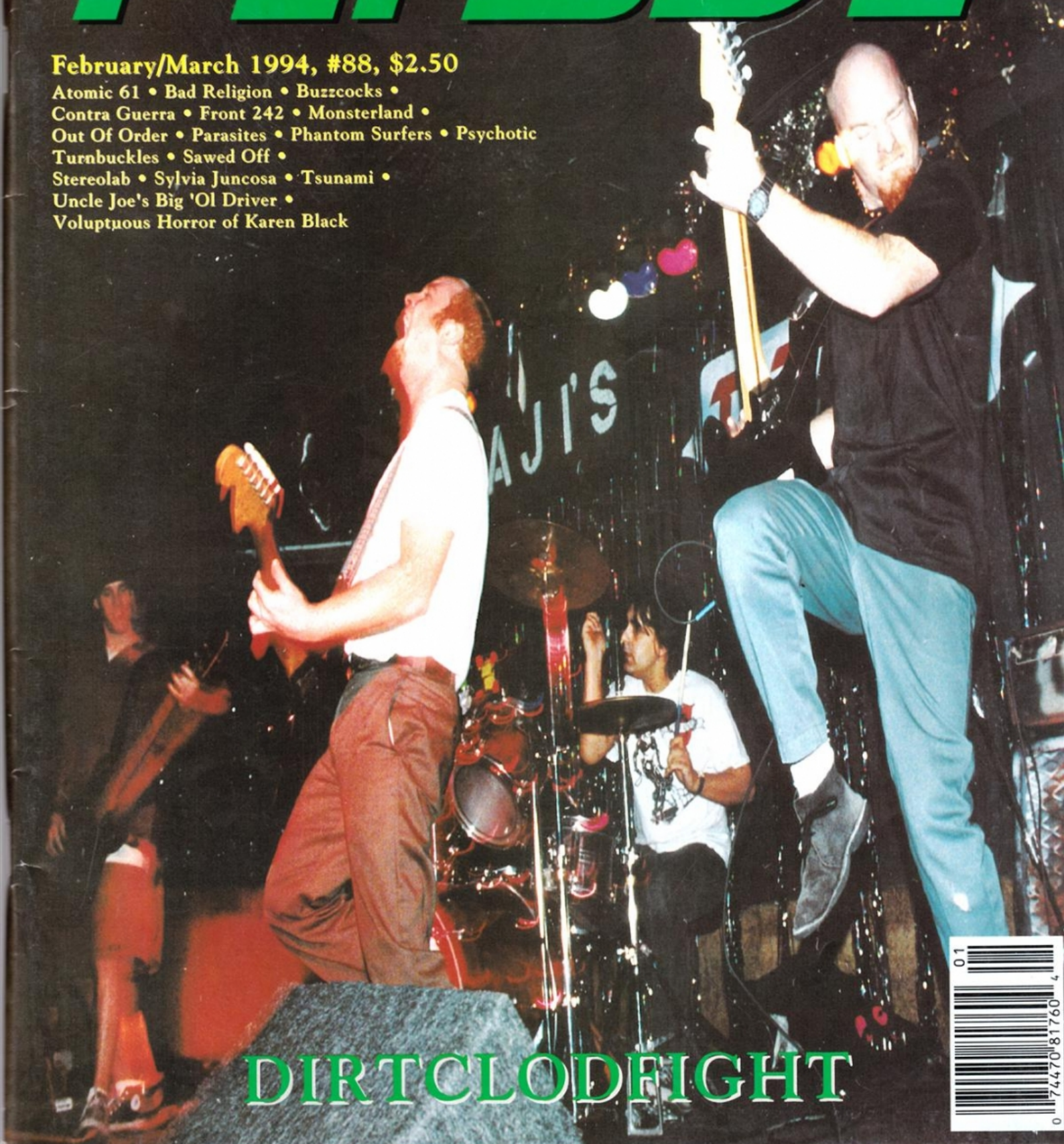


# FLIPSIDE

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Stereolab • Sylvia Juncosa • Tsunami •  
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Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black



DIRT CLODFIGHT



# At last! The secrets of Bad Religion revealed!

by Rev. Gary X. Indiana, B.F.D.

Sacrilege! Blasphemy! A band that calls itself "punk," one of the original hardcore LA bands, a band that rails against dogma and government and conformity etc., a band we call Bad Religion, gets signed! Voluntarily allows itself to be absorbed by a major record label corporate entity! Moloch! Beelzebub!

For how many pieces of silver did they sell the trust of their devoted fans to the evil Antipunk Inc.? Whores! Adulterers! Did they all sign their names in blood on the unholy Contract? Did they wash their hands, and seal their fates? Jezebels! Babylons! And did Flipside, having released a new video of an old Bad Religion gig, become party to this unholy pact? Are we unclean, are we tainted, are we no longer the holy font of punkdom? Que lastima, que dolor! Dios mio!

Having spent sleepless nights, plagued by demonic visitations, succubi, and random stigmata, I decided to look the devil straight in the eye via telephone and ask him, "OK Brett Gurewitz, original Bad Religion guy and Epitath Records owner, just what the hades is going on here?"

Brett: "I did it strictly for the money."

**Good God! So is that it in a nutshell? Or am I just teasing you like a sleazy punk rock journalist? To find out, read on....**

**So how was the tour?**

It was pretty good, relatively uneventful, pretty big crowds. I think they were the biggest crowds yet. But of course we toured with Green Day. That was part of it because they're pretty popular too, and us together is a pretty good show. And Seaweed, so that's a pretty great three band bill.

**How is Epitath doing?**

Epitath's doing great, better than ever. Some records are really taking off like NOFX, and Rancid and Pennywise and Offspring. Even the groups that aren't selling huge numbers like Clawhammer for instance still are doing well by most indie label standards.

**So, why did Bad Religion go to Atlantic?**

That's probably a question you'd have to ask each band member separately. If it comes down to a vote, every-



Bobby Schayer Greg Graffin Greg Hetson Brett Gurewitz Jay Bentley

PHOTO CREDIT: LISA JOHNSON

## BAD RELIGION



body probably has their own motivation. How about if I just speak for myself? I did it strictly for the money.

**Obviously Atlantic can promote you better than Epitath, moneywise.**

I'm not so sure about that. Money isn't everything as far as promotion goes. Epitath always did a good job.

**Then why go there? Did they just give you money up front?**

Yeah, when we give them a record, they'll give it to us.

**Are they selling Recipe For Hate now or how does that work?**

I held on to every record from Generator back. The group requested that I turn it over to Atlantic. So Recipe For Hate switched over to Atlantic mid-stream.

**Did they pay like for a new album?**

They paid a little something but it wasn't really much. I turned that over to Atlantic simply because the group

wanted me to. If you're gonna discuss money I would've made more money by keeping the record. But the group asked me to so I did.

**The reason I'm discussing money is because the common theory is that you sold yourselves to the highest bidder.**

Yeah, that we sold out. I'm not gonna argue with that. On the other hand, I have to reiterate, that I'm only speaking for myself. I don't think everyone else in the group would agree with me.

We're catching a lot of flak for signing to a major, and we probably deserve it, and you're not gonna find me being defensive about it. But I will say, that if you dig the music, for me that's the final word.

**Why Atlantic in particular?**

The different labels the group met with, we liked Atlantic the best. The president of Atlantic seemed to show genuine interest in the group. We seemed to hit it off with him. He's a pretty cool guy, he's a head of the ACLU. He seemed to be genuinely enthusiastic about us, about our lyrics and our politics and so on.

**What about the idea of the major labels being evil, the kiss of death, etc., as expressed by some letters to Flipside among other things?**

I know that the Sex pistols were on EMI and the Clash were on CBS and probably a lot of the people who are pretty upset with Bad Religion like those bands. I think indie labels generally speaking are way cooler than majors, there's no question about it. On the other hand, almost every indie label is not a non-profit endeavor. Most indie labels make their money off what they do and so, if the indie label becomes successful and the cool music they're putting out gets popular, then, I think inevitably they'll become very similar to a major. You look at Virgin records, started out as a small indie, and I dunno how many years later sold for 750 million dollars and became part of EMI. Before that time that it did sell it really was still an indie, the biggest indie in the world. It begs the question, what is an indie? If the next NOFX record went multi-platinum, like Nirvana "Nevermind", even if I didn't really change anything at Epitaph, wouldn't we be analogous to a major label and all the bad things they represent? And if so why, and what is the essence of what makes a major label bad? If it's the fact that major labels put out crappy music, it wouldn't be a fair assessment to say that Epitaph is any different than it ever was, but if the criteria for judging a label is that it can't sell a lot of records, then yeah, you know what I mean?

I think about it a lot. In the meantime I'm still running my record company and trying to sign as many cool bands as I can. And if one of them becomes huge, then I'll be happy. I'm not going to throw in the towel and quit.

**I guess when bands or labels get big enough they should just quit and say hey, we're just getting too big.**

Oh by did that, that was cool. But, I would've preferred for them to stick together so we coulda had more cool records. I don't know exactly why it happened, in fact I never talked to them about it, but I heard through the grapevine that they broke up because they were getting too popular and it wasn't punk to be super popular. I guess that's one way of looking at it. There is the notion that a punk rock group will alienate its fans upon getting popular. Its a self-fulfilling prophecy. I don't think that there's anything wrong with it, and I respect it, and I think it's valid. Its something that's been discussed for a long time. I've been reading about this issue in Flipside for, it's embarrassing to say, something like 13 years. And what it means is this, it's very simple: people who decide that they're gonna be punks make a decision to lead an alternative lifestyle outside or on the fringe of the mainstream. They listen to certain types of music that fit their lifestyle, wear certain kinds of clothing that fit their lifestyle. And once one of their groups that they like becomes popular on a mass level, then that group is no longer on the fringe of the mainstream or outside of mainstream consciousness. It becomes adopted by the mainstream. So the individual has a choice, either to reject that band, not because necessarily their music changed, but in order to maintain their chosen lifestyle on the fringe, outside of the mainstream. because to continue to accept that group would mean that they're now a part of the mainstream. It's not their fault and it's not the group's fault. It's just that pop culture is not static. And what was underground or fringe yesterday quite often can become what is acceptable or mainstream today. Some people choose not to reject just because other strangers in the mainstream have decided to like them. But I respect the decision to do that if somebody chooses to in order to maintain a rigorously alternative lifestyle. And anybody who chooses to do that should understand that it's a self-fulfilling prophecy,

that you can't really expect an artist to be in control of who likes them. All you can expect them to do is to put out the best art they can.

**It seemed like the LA scene when I lived there, and maybe it's typical, maybe half the bands were playing to have fun and be sloppy and drink beer, and the other half were playing because at least in the back of their minds they were thinking gee, I wanna do this for a living and make money and have a lot of people listening to me; and when that happens you're famous!**



**Bad Religion at the Warfield, San Francisco - photo by Gary Indiana**

I never thought well, I'm gonna be a rock star for a living, it never occurred to me that that was a possibility. I knew I liked music and wanted to be involved in it to make a living, and that's why I started a record label. I figured that if my group never could earn me a living, at least I could still stay in the music scene by having a record company. And in the meantime I would have a creative outlet by writing songs for Bad Religion. And if you listen from record to record to record, there was never really a drastic change in style. There was a gradual change in style, and there are those who say screw Bad Religion because all their songs sound the same, and there's also the school of thought who say screw Bad Religion because they've changed and now they sound commercial! But there's probably an equal number of both. And really, I never thought about having to write a song that someone else would like. I always just tried to write good Bad Religion songs. And we've written a lot of them in the last five or six years, and the group got popular. And like I said before, if someone wants to hold that against me, I respect it, and I think it's valid. But it's equally valid for somebody who's never heard of punk rock, who put on the record and enjoys it, to say I like this group.

**So you can be a punk rocker and enjoy it or not be a punk rocker and enjoy it, and there's nothing wrong with that?**

Yeah, I'll stay out of the loop. It's none of my business who likes me or hates me.

**Regarding Eddie Vedder, why was he on the album, tell me?**

It didn't seem like a big deal at the time. We became acquainted with those guys on the road in Germany. Actually we were playing the festival circuit over there, and believe it or not, Pearl Jam was opening for us. Actually Greg had met Eddie a long time ago at a Bad Religion show because he had been a fan. And so, you know, we became friends. And then, when we were doing Recipe For Hate in L.A., it just so happened that we were doing our background vocal overdubs one day when Eddie was in town, and we just invited him down. Like, that day we thought of it, it wasn't like it was some big plan that like, let's get a star on our record and help boost ourselves to stardom, it was just kinda like very spontaneous. We had him on the phone and said well, why don't you come over, we're doing background vocals now. He's like, ok, and he cruised over in his Mazda truck and sang a few lines. If you listen to the record you can't even hear him.

**No, you can't tell it's Eddie Vedder, his voice hardly stands out from the other vocals. It's not like you guys invited Cher over to do a duet.**

But all those people hate him now because he's such a huge rock star. Not nearly as many people hate him as people who love him. But when we played in Seattle, he came onstage with us and sang one song, and people were flipping him off and spittin' on him and it totally bummed him out. Y'know, for those who think that it was some premeditated plot to break us into the mainstream, they should think about this: if we really wanted to use our friendship to make Bad Religion any bigger, we would've gotten Eddie to let Greg sing on the Pearl Jam record!

**And Jonette from Concrete Blond, that's a good scream she does on there, but....**

We've been friends with Jonette for about 13 years. Jim Manke, who's in Concrete Blond with her? 13 years ago Jim and Jonette were boyfriend and girlfriend, and they were friends of me and Greg. And if you look at How Can Hell Be Any Worse, well Jim produced it. So that's been a long-running friendship and connection there.

**So what's in the works?**

We've got a two week tour coming up in January. We're going as far north as Petaluma, south to San Diego, and a far east as New Jersey.

**And with Atlantic?**

We're writing songs right now. We'll be recording in April, and I think the record will come out in September. It should be pretty fuckin' punk. I think could be a really good record. It's gonna be a little bit more hardcore than Recipe was. I just wrote a song the other day that sounds like something off of "No Control." Maybe it'll surprise some people.

**So there you have it!!**

**In other shocking Bad Religion news, Greg Graffin is shutting back and forth from Cornell where he's working on a Ph.D., Jay has left employment at Epitaph to be a hockey nut, full-time musician and dad, Brett and wife Maggie have a baby named Maxwell Edison (after the Beatles' "Maxwell's Silver Hammer"), and Hetson, bummed about the Kings' poor playing, is contemplating a cover band called "FarhfigNugent." Good Lord.**