

THE AP HISTORY OF PUNK: AUSSIE ANARCHY!

NEW MUSIC NOW

ALTERNATIVE PRESS

PSYCH ROCK
EXPLOSION!

With Mercury Rev, Sundial,
And Brian Jonestown Massacre

THE CURE

"If it was my choice,
we would've ended ten years ago."



95 JUNE 96 • USA \$3.99 • CAN \$4.99

HAIR WE GO AGAIN!



DISPLAY UNTIL JUNE 6

• Kelley Deal 6000 • Lou Reed
• Bad Religion • Stereolab • Lush

Bad Religion give a flying folk. Johnny Pecorelli told us.

Holed up in Bad Religion's Hollywood practice pad the day before their first live show in six months, Greg Gaffin digs into a burger and tells a tale of corporate evil.

"We're a straightforward band," says the singer, researcher of bone tissue evolution at Cornell and daddy of two. "There was no intervention from any label owners. But just to show you how bad it could've been: You know the great duo Simon and Garfunkel? Did you know that Garfunkel had to change his name? Because Paul Simon, who with the support of his label, wouldn't even play with Garfunkel unless he did. Today we know him as Art Garfunkel. But that's not his real name."



SUBTLETY AND GRAYS

WIRE
TAPPING

Gaffin pauses for effect. "What is it?" someone asks. "Fartimus. Fartimus." Snickers ensue, but Gaffin looks sober. Nothing was changed when Bad Religion moved to a major. In fact, the new album, *The Gray Race*, is easily their best since 1989's *No Control*. There is pressure to conform, but ironically it's now coming from sectors of the "indie scene," who may have forgiven the Stooges, Ramones, Pistols and Clash their major-label deals—but no one since. "Well, when those records came out it didn't occur to anybody that the name on the outside of the cardboard album cover had anything to do with the music on the record itself," guitarist Brian Baker steams, albeit grinning. "And nowadays apparently there's some correlation between the two. But they had to be told it wasn't cool to like that before they knew they weren't supposed to. A message to those people: Kill yourself!" he laughs. "Or better yet—just go fuck yourself!" "File under: 'Wasting Oxygen,'" adds Gaffin. "But if you're a punk band it is easier to sell records today than it was ten years ago. I don't think that detracts from the intent of the music, though."

Unless some particular fashion sense dictates that selling records somehow compromises your credibility—a supposition that has existed with punk since John Rotten first donned his "I hate Pink Floyd" shirt in '77.

"We aren't really good commentators on the early English punk explosion," Gaffin emphatically states. "I'm glad it died three years after it started because it shows that people weren't really into the fashion element of it. I think the reason Green Day and Offspring are more popular today than any of the bands from that era is because they're striking a nerve in people that is very fundamental—a lot more fundamental than weird-looking guys with English accents talking about how hard their working conditions are."

"You mean Rancid?" asks Brian, grinning. Nonetheless, Gaffin recalls a time when he'd listen to anything—even prog rockers like Emerson, Lake & Palmer—as long as it wasn't popular.

"There are bands operating under that very premise today: 'Don't make it too good, man. Too many people might like it,'" he says. "Their main thrust in creating music is to *not* make it generally appealing, a juvenile persona of being not like anything else. But more often than not it means... bad."

"Every kid goes through it," agrees bassist Jay Bentley. "But by the time you're playing onstage in front of audiences, it's time to abandon that. Because people are actually paying for it now."

"Either that or have a damn good light show!" says Brian.

Bad Religion don't really even have a light show. They don't sing about parties, girls or cars. By rock and roll's flashy standards, it might be understandable they're wrongly perceived as near-puritanical. The tag is certainly not helped by Gaffin's occasional description of the band as "folksy."

"I never used that term! I said it was 'like folk music' but I didn't say folksy!" he almost yells, the rest of band cracking up. "Certainly the delivery of my voice isn't that different really from a lot of folk music—I'm not trying to sound like the singer of Stone Temple Pilots or something. The music is very sparse, the guitars aren't multilayered or processed. It's not elaborate; it's something that anyone can play in their garage. It's very populist-oriented. Even the things we talk about are populist in scope. So it's very much like folk music. A lot louder, of course..."

"The element of rebellious rock has reached its limit," Jay says, sitting back down. "The last great threatening act was hip hop/gangsta rap, and you saw all these white suburban high school kids going, 'Yeah, Homey G!' and everyone else going, 'What a dick!' I mean, GG Allin shoved a microphone up his ass—you don't go much beyond that..."

MARINA CHAVEZ