

"Are those fucking guys still at it?"

BY TIM COVERT

I thought I had been forgotten about. The busy promotional whirlwind for the debut *Kids in the Hall* movie — *Brain Candy* — that had given me fifteen minutes of interview time with Bruce McCulloch had blown past this small but vital reporter on its way to larger interviews. Then the phone call came saying Bruce was ready to talk to me. "Is he ready and raring to go," I said?

Silence.

Then the unmistakable voice, with a strong smell of Gavin and a small hint of Mr. Cabbagehead, said "Well, I'm not raring to go. But I'm ready to go."

Gaz: I was talking to Cathy Jones this past weekend...

Bruce: [gasps] Isn't she the coolest?

Gaz: Yeah...and she was talking about how it was tough to keep ensemble groups together and how CODCO had sort of gone past their expiry date. Have the *Kids in the Hall* gone past their expiry date?

Bruce: [very Gavin laughter] You know it's funny, I've never been asked that question before. No, I don't think so. Maybe people in bars are going, "Those fucking guys, are they still at it?" but I think when people stay too long I think it's because they stop caring about their work. And I think we actually care more about our work than we ever have.

There was an article by Andrew Clark in *Saturday Night Magazine* this month that described some of the on-set difficulties the *Kids* had during the filming of the movie. The *Kids*, as well as writing the film with Norm Hiscock, portrayed a total of 50 different characters during thirty-seven days of shooting in the summer of 1995. That spring Kevin McDonald's wife had left him and one of Scott Thompson's brothers committed suicide two weeks prior to the start of filming. Clark suggested that at least these two *Kids* were potential candidates for the anti-depression drug discovered in *Brain Candy*. I asked Bruce if the *Kids* as a whole were having a tough time and about the confusion of everybody going in their own direction.

Bruce: The truth is everybody's life is always confusing all the time. Life is hard and we have very complicated lives and I think we're doing pretty good. Doing the film was hard, but doing the TV series was hard too, and before we got the TV series it was really hard and so it's all hard in a way but we sort of bring it on.

Gaz: Weekly television is said to be one of the most highly stressful performing mediums you can be in. Did that change making the film, cause you had more time, you didn't have to put out the material every single week?

Bruce: Yeah. I think because it was the first time we went through it, it will be easier next time. But TV is great too because you just do stuff fast. It surprises you sometimes and material is really fresh. And sometimes you're learning it the day you're doing it. And the film is a bit of a different thing. I'd wrote and was in thousands of sketches, I didn't need to be in that many more. It was so hard and the toll it took on our lives was probably the biggest reason we stopped doing the



The children in the vestibule, coming soon to a theatre near you.

TV series.

Gaz: Going through the whole film did you miss the audience response?

Bruce: I think we sort of started to cherish the film work we did on the show. I think if I did the TV series again I'd do it without the live audience. I think we liked the film more 'cause of what it could allow you to do. You could do an insert inside a mouse's brain or something. As a performer, I sort of miss a live audience. But films are sort of the most interesting thing I can think of.

Bruce is in the process of putting some other film work together but

is thinking of doing some more work with Bob Wiseman, the producer of McCulloch's record, *Shame Based Man*. He never toured with *Shame Based Man* aside from a performance at the 1994 Halifax Pop Explosion and one in Austin Texas, and if he does some touring again it would probably be a more theatrical performance.

Bruce: Halifax sort of scared me. I'm not a rock star, I don't want to be a rock star — not that I was a rock star — but I think it can work. People come up to me and ask 'What do you play?' I don't play anything. I do what I've always done: words and mono-

logue. It would be slightly more theatrical and slightly less rock and roll if I did it again.

McCulloch says that although he respects audiences and want audiences to like him, the most fun he has is when he's writing. He says that being on stage and getting big laughs embarrasses him somehow.

Bruce: When we do live shows and people cheer when they see us it kind of embarrasses me a bit. I'm so happy that they're responding and we're connecting but I don't know what to do with that. I don't know where it goes. I'm not an entertainer. Scott Thompson is an entertainer. I'm

not; I'm something else.

While I had Bruce on the phone I had to ask him about one of my favourite pieces on *Shame Based Man*, "Vigil." The song talks in a funny yet incredibly honest way about the way Bruce felt being in Seattle the day of Kurt Cobain's vigil. Of all the editorializing that was done over the suicide of Cobain, "Vigil" is the only commentary that I felt ever gave an even take. All of the others were either heavy handed, death-of-the-rock messiah eulogies or damning, devaluing criticism. A lot of people who were affected by his death have laughed at McCulloch's piece and felt better. I asked Bruce how such an introspective piece came to be on the album.

Bruce: It was actually Al Miller — who produced part of the record — who said, "That's the most honest [impression]... there's Bruce." It was one of those things that I write all the time. I just wrote it and looked at it and said you know this could be on the record somehow. I think sometimes when you write something and you don't think about what's going to happen with it, it can somehow be...not more honest but you never judge what's going to happen to it.

People got mad at me about that, too. They missed the point. They thought I was making fun of Kurt Cobain's vigil. It was more about death culture. It seemed like kind of an obvious point to me. People can get real knee jerk.

Gaz: Who is *Brain Candy* aimed at, your fans, or people who have never seen your work?

Bruce: People always talk about our fans like they're a different kind of people, like people with blue skin or something. 'Oh that's a *Kids* fan and that isn't.' I like REM, but does that mean I'm going to buy every single one of their records? I don't think we think it's for anybody. We never thought the show was for anybody. It's only when you go out and meet people that you actually realize that it has some impact and people are watching it. My hopes for it are that, as with the show, people who will like it will find it.

McCulloch says that the *Kids in the future* are going to do more films. Whether that means that it will be just McDonald and him, or the two of them and Thompson, or all five of them, Bruce hopes that they'll be sort of together. It doesn't sadden him that because of their schedules that they can't keep that group dynamic.

Bruce: I am amazed we did five years of the series. It doesn't sadden me. I think if we'd broken up after two years of the series I might look back and go "Well we should have done it longer." But we all thought we did the series as long as we should've and I think our future is ahead of us in terms of film. We all have to do other things but we're all also gonna do the troupe too. Or most of us are. I feel actually kind of good about it.

If even a small portion of the *Kids in the Hall* entity survives, I'm gonna feel really good about it. *Brain Candy* opens nationwide on April 12th.

We have a varied assortment of *Kids in the Hall* peripheralia to give away. Come on up and, if we're not here, well, sorry. We have exams, too.



Filth Pig
Ministry
Warner Bros

Nearly four years since their last release — *Psalm 69* — and after several side projects, Al Jourgensen and Paul Barker have returned to the pulpit to preach as only Ministry can. This time, these industrial pioneers have left the samples in the background and deliver pure guitar-driven rock, with sounds so thick, you couldn't cut them with a chain saw.

The songs on *Filth Pig* are like a freight train; they start out slow, are incredibly strong, and if you are not careful they will run over you and squash you like an overripe tomato. Maximum distortion and heavy guitar layering are a natural progression (or regression, depending on your point of view) from previous releases. While *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste* and earlier releases were more techno, *Psalm 69* showed a turn towards a more guitar-focused sound.

And that album brings us to the present.

Keeping with an annoying Ministry tradition, there are no lyrics included with the CD. The track listing and credits are hard enough to read, having been printed in block letters without the aid of spaces or punctuation. It takes several listens to make out even a few words of Al Jourgensen's mechanically enhanced crooning. "Everything is useless/Nothing works at all/Nothing ever matters/Welcome to the fall" stand out from "The Fall" as typical examples of the morbid subject matter encompassed on *Filth Pig*.

There are so many excellent songs here, it is hard to pick a couple to talk about. "Brick Windows" is the closest you will get to a traditional Ministry song, with a more upbeat, moshable rhythm. The inclusion of the Bob Dylan cover, "Lay Lady, Lay" may raise some eyebrows, but does not feel out of place. Also deserving of praise are "Dead Guys," "Lava," and the title track, "Filth Pig."

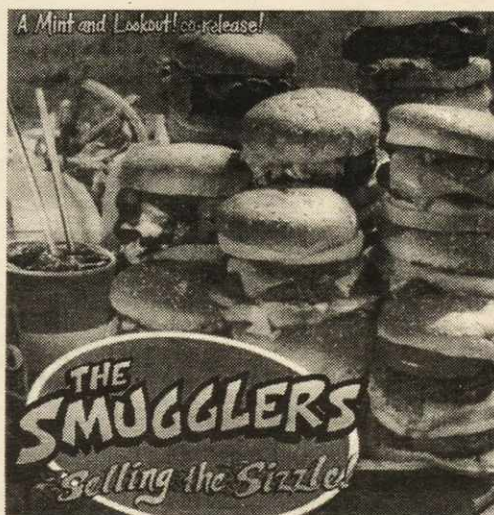
If the music on this release was a living creature, picture it as a Lovecraftian monster crawling through the shadows of an old abandoned house, invincible and ready to pounce on it's unsuspect-

ing victims. That would be Ministry's "Filth Pig." Scary stuff, and well worth the long wait.

NEIL FRASER

Selling the Sizzle
The Smugglers
Mint/Lookout!

After deliberating for several hours on just what the hell type of music The Smugglers play, I've come to one conclu-



sion: there's no such type. So far, I've counted influences from punk, Sloan-ish pop, greasy rock n' roll, ska, and sixties surf on this CD, and that doesn't include what other people have observed. As weird as it sounds, the Smugglers — from West Vancouver,

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