

# "Just the facts, ma'am": Draggnetts largely apolitical

by Dave Cox

In the young but growing tradition of Gateway interviews with the stars of the local alternative pop music scene, we proudly present some of the choice thoughts of Darryl Sterdan, of the Draggnetts ...

**Gateway:** To start with, why don't you give me a brief history of the band?

**Sterdan:** They formed about a year ago in February and decided they wanted to play Rockabilly because it was what they wanted to do and there wasn't anybody else doing it. I joined about September. Since then things have been picking up. We're recording on E.P. now. The band consists of me, Dennis L. on bass and Drew Berman on guitar.

**Gateway:** What do you aim for in the music? You play basically Rockabilly, up tempo stuff....

**Sterdan:** In essence it's for dance music, I guess. We try to have something to say with the songs we write, as opposed to just being "Baby baby, Let's Dance" type songs.

We're not really aiming for straight Rockabilly, it's too constricting, you can't really do anything. There aren't forty good Rockabilly songs. So we've been doing Rhythm & Blues, some Jump Jazz Blues and even some straight Rock'n'Roll stuff.

**Gateway:** You commented that you didn't think there was a place for bands to make political statements outside of what they might do in their songs. Why don't you elaborate on your feelings on that, and I won't put words in your mouth?

**Sterdan:** What you said was close. It's great if somebody can express political views if they're qualified. But I don't think you have the right to have what you think about politics put in print just because you play in a band. More specifically, we can talk about the Vincent Evans thing in Gateway a few weeks back. I mean, Vince is entitled to his opinions, but he's not entitled to have them

put on display for everyone to read. Playing in a band, and even having any level of popularity — I mean Office, and Draggnetts and the Mods are popular, I mean we're not household words, but even having that small measure of popularity gives you some influence on people, to the extent where if you put in the interview "I think anybody who likes Captain Beefheart should go out and buy the album Clear Spot", maybe one person will go out and buy it, it's still a small degree of influence. With having that influence you have to have responsibility to the extent where if you're not qualified to talk about something, you keep your mouth shut. When Vince said things about wanting to have a fist fight with Reagan, it was done with humor, unfortunately humor doesn't translate to the printed page very well. You can't read emotion in the black-and-white words. If even one fool out there is going to be influenced by Vince's rash statements, that's one too many.

**Gateway:** Obviously you have political ideas.

**Sterdan:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**Gateway:** Do you try to write things in your songs that are political?

**Sterdan:** No, not really. The songs I try to write, if they have a message it's usually pretty vague. We have a song called "Dial R for Red" that somebody just told me they're playing on CJRS occasionally, it'll be one of the songs on our E.P. It's just got a small message; basically the song is about having some ideal that keeps you going to the extent where nothing matters.

The character in the song is searching for something that symbolizes to him the ultimate goal. And he wants that so badly that nothing else matters. He's down and out, but he keeps thinking about that goal. That's the kind of message we put in.

Which is not to say that there's anything wrong, I mean, I love to listen to the Clash's *Sandinista* and things like that. That's great that they have a political thing to say because they're qualified to say it. I've read a lot of things with Joe Strummer

and he obviously knows what he's talking about. If for nothing else, having grown up in England you're exposed to that situation more than Canada, and he's travelled round the world, and he's well-read, and he's qualified to say it, whereas I'm not qualified to say it, and nobody else in this town is.

**Gateway:** What is the band going to be doing in the near future?

**Sterdan:** Well, the only thing that's going on is that we're just finishing recording an E.P. of our own stuff, and were doing our tracks for the West Watch album which is

apparently finally going to come off. Other than that, just the same old stuff — a Dinwoodie here, a RATT there.

**Gateway:** Any comments on the local music scene?

**Sterdan:** I think Edmonton's a good place to get your start. There's an audience for alternative things here. I'm from Winnipeg, and there, if you don't play the top twenty you're not going to get any work. Out here, where you can have groups like us, and the Mods, and even Moe Berg, it's great. It gives people a chance to see other than the same bands doing the same twenty songs.

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