

ARTS

# AURAL SECTION

## No Corporate Games



by Hugh Hardy

**The Replacements**  
*All Shook Down*

Bad press can kill anybody. It killed Jesus Christ; but as biblical historians will tell you, even he was only crucified once. The Replacements have been getting nailed once every six quarters since Tim came out in '85.

It never fails to piss me. As soon as we are blessed with their newest installment, some shit-eating critic, in between heaps of gooey praise, goes through the regular motions: "buncha drunk numbskulls... old shows consisted of everything from 'Hello Dolly' to 'Ride of the Valkyries'... used to be punk... but they got better... blah, blah, blah..."

One article per mag, and then

they may as well drop off the planet: no follow-ups, no tour coverage, no "Paul Westerburg — The Rolling Stone Interview" (ironically, that piece of trash SPIN heralded them as THE # MOST UNDERRATED BAND... OF ALL TIME!!! Sounds romantic, but being underrated doesn't pay the bills). Bad press kills. But no press, for a band with so much to offer, is a fate worse than death.

Why, my droogies? Why? Cuz they don't play the corporate games. No fake sexuality a la Cult, no amateur political posing a la REM, no goofy, brooding image a la US. In brief, nothing that sells in today's aesthetically minded collective mentality.

I don't give a flying fuck what you mealy-mouthed U2/REM acolytes, up there in Peanut Gallery dumpin' gasoline in yer heads and lightin' matches say; The Replacements have been, in every aspect, outclassing EVERY guitar band ANYWHERE (even during the dark days of Don't Tell A Soul), every since the glorious days of Hootenanny, some seven years ago.

I have often wondered what it is that spares Westerburg's writing from the maudlin excesses of tripe like the junk John Cougar pukes up. I found the answer in a critical essay by Janet H. McKay, entitled "Tears and Flapdoodle," on the narrative structure of Huckleberry Finn. He states, "which uses vernacular or colloquial American English to revitalize the imaginative representation of reality."

To put it plainly — so does Westerburg.

"Nobody" picks up on a faceless Mid-West "average-girl" character Westerburg created way back on "Customer," from *Sorry Ma*, their first LP. A character he has been developing over the years on "Within Your Reach," "Sixteen Blue," "Valentine," and last year's "Achin to Be."

Little Miss Mid-West is finally getting married; but Westy just knows she's got an awful case of the Jesus creeping shits: "Knees quake/There ain't a shotgun in the place/You like the frosting/You just bought the cake." She's still in love with "Nobody," and Paul used to be "Nobody."

There have been so many precious moments and characters like this over the course of the Replacements' career. It's almost said to remember them because they have passed by most, relatively unnoticed.

The Replacements are doomed Kafkaesque heroes in terms of audience appreciation. They cannot go back to hardcore, for fear of being called nostalgia mongers, and they cannot go forward for fear of being called sell-outs. On *All Shook Down*, Westerburg has made a ballsy, but logical decision by, for the most part, dumping the skornk for acoustic guitars. We know full well what they are capable of, now they're showing us what else is up their collective sleeve.

Like Huck it would be easy to grind it out on the river (or in the river like fish, in the Mats case), but they just know they're much more interesting raising shit onshore.

## You Can't Go Back

by Bruce Adamson

**Andy Curran**  
*Andy Curran*  
Alert Records

Ahh, the memories, the memories... fake I.D... humungous lukewarm beer that you could only get at the Gasworks... Coney Hatch... All the trappings of a great 1983-style Saturday night.

Andy Curran was always the best part of Coney Hatch. His tunes rocked like crazy, his lyrics were coy and witty, and his wry, street-wise singing style was far more interesting than bandmate (and co-singer) Carl Dixon's Lou Gramm-soaked offering.



he has no edge.

His current outfit comes across as lightweight AC/DC with (shudder!) heavy synth padding and come-on-down-the-gang's-all-here backing vocals. Gone is the sass, the humour and the guitar thunder that made Curran's Coney tunes (Monkey Bars, Love Poison) such gems. In his bid for

the mainstream, Curran has quite simply gone soft.

Sure there are exceptions; "C'mon, C'mon" and "Moonbeams" have nice choruses. The single, "Nickels and Dimes" is a great Zeppelin-influenced number with some cool bottleneck slide and a very Pagey verse riff. But these are exceptions.

All in all, Andy Curran is slick, produced and neither good nor bad; it's boring.

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