

# Truth: An honest interview

interview by Warren Opheim

I spent an evening in Ratt in late July talking with three local musicians who go by the handle Truth. They have recently released an independent album, *Day After Dark*, and it has enjoyed airplay locally on CJSR and on a couple of late night radio programs broadcast nationally.

The interview was enjoyable, but it was not without mishaps. The tape recorder was knocked over twice (but survived), the drinks were nearly charged to a nonexistent Gateway tab, and someone was trying to make a film of the patrons dancing to a Talking Heads song; consequently, the song was played over and over (and over) until the cameraman was right happy. To top things off, I nearly left the campus without my portable stereo. Other than that, everything was just peachy.

In case you don't already know, Drew Berman is the lead guitarist, Vic Gailiunas is the drummer, and Jon Adams is the bassist and lead singer. What follows is our conversation, more or less.

**Warren:** Okay, I suppose the most obvious question is: Why "Truth"? To be honest, when I first saw an advertising poster for one of your first gigs, I thought the name was, well...

**Vic:** Pretentious?

**Warren:** Yes, exactly. How did the name come about?

**Vic:** It's a name that we have been trying to work into as opposed to, say, the old bands where the Draggnets really sounded like a rockabilly name, or the Mods, well...

**Drew:** Heh, heh.

**Vic:** I mean, those names dictated what we were going to play, whereas "Truth" was just a name that we had. It didn't mean much then, but means much more now, because we've decided that the route we want to take lyrically is along philosophical and emotional lines. When I think of Truth now, without thinking about the pretentious side of it, it feels philosophical, and a lot of our songs ask for answers.

**Drew:** At the same time, it's not anything too cerebral; we're not looking for a truth that's going to solve the mysteries of the universe. We're not saying we have the answers...

**Vic:** We don't have the answers, so we're not trying to dictate any. If we were, then I would agree that we were being very pretentious, but we're asking for answers, so I don't worry about appearing pretentious.

**Drew:** We're young. We don't have the answers. A lot of the questions in our songs arise through personal experiences. We don't keep them in the first person format, though. We change it around to give them a more universal appeal.

**Vic:** That can also apply to personal thoughts, feelings and ideas that we as young people are curious about, and I think a lot of people can relate to those questions.

**Warren:** One thing I noticed about the band that is quite rare these days is that all three of you write, both music and lyrics. Is this something you aimed for, or did it just evolve that way?

**Vic:** We don't have to write as a group and we don't have to write alone. We can all write music and we can all write lyrics. For instance, with one of our newer songs, Jon and I wrote the music. Drew learned the music and right away he said, "I've got a good idea for lyrics" and he went home and penned the lyrics for it. So we don't dictate that certain people have certain functions. One thing that we think is important is that when it comes to the actual arrangement of the songs, we all put in our two cents.

**Drew:** It's a three way process.

**Jon:** It's good that we all write; it allows for more creativity.

**Vic:** A lot of the songs, especially the ones probably to be released in the future, are credited, for the most part, to Drew and myself, but that's for the actual writing. As far as the arranging goes, we all put a lot into each song.

**Drew:** I might write a song, but I can't tell Vic how to play certain drum patterns, and at the same time he can't tell me how to play my guitar patterns. We constantly bounce ideas off each other. To me, that's the most ideal arrangement for a band, as opposed to having one person dictate.

**Vic:** Because Jon's the lead singer, he's the one who arranges the vocals for the most part, and vocals are the basic focus for a song. The music and lyrics may be written by any one of us, but what you're actually hearing is

a lot of Jon's contribution because he's the principal vocalist.

**Warren:** Okay, I guess now is a good time to bring up the standard (pun intended) question about influences. Who are they?

**Jon:** Vic and Drew.

**Vic:** Jon and Drew.

**Drew:** Abbot and Costello. No, anyone who's in a band, whatever they hear, wherever they are — that's an influence to them. That's why it's hard to say, for example, "The Police influenced me."

**Jon:** I think musically, we're all influenced by each other. What one person might suggest, the others can play off it.

**Vic:** In one respect we're different from a lot of other bands in that all three of us write our songs. In most bands, only one or two people write the songs, whereas we all write and arrange the songs together, so it's always a group effort. Even a song like "Razor Blades and Roses" — it's credited to Drew, but all three of us arranged it.

**Jon:** We listen to such a wide spectrum of music that it's hard to pinpoint one or two.

**Vic:** The influences aren't always restricted to music. There are plays, novels, articles...

**Warren:** Like "Zoo Story"?

**Vic:** Yeah, "Zoo Story" for one. We just finished a song where the whole idea was taken from an article Jon read in *Omni* magazine.

**Warren:** What about your previous bands? Has their influence had a big impact on Truth?

**Jon:** It influences what we do now because we know the mistakes we made in the old bands; we know what was good in the old bands.

**Vic:** They gave us a lot of experience playing in front of crowds and in writing and performing our material, so we came into this band with a professional sort of attitude. Also, because Drew would come see the Standards play, he was familiar with Jon and my capabilities, and we knew Drew's capabilities through his old band. That's another way the previous bands helped.

**Warren:** You're all pretty snappy dressers. Is

your stage appearance important to you?

**Jon:** We like to get a mood across with our music, and we like to reinforce that with a visual image. You could almost say it was pretentious in the way that we want to prove that we know what we're talking about; we can back up our lyrics with our visual image. Our lyrics might be sophisticated, so we don't want to come on wearing Bermuda shorts and a T-shirt.

**Vic:** It's important when you play for people to give them some sort of show. When you see a band with a certain look, it should enhance their music. I think that, in general, people like to see performers as being a little different from themselves. It's not as if we want to separate ourselves from our audience, but we want a barrier that says that we're doing the show and they're there to see the show.

**Warren:** Like Devo.

**Drew:** Sure.

**Vic:** Like Devo, or Kiss, or Alice Cooper, or Bowie. You know, a show.

**Drew:** We want to present an image to the public that would visually reflect the music, to that extent we wanted something that would look modern without being trendy. Something that looks modern will have a lasting effect, but if something is trendy, it's great for a while and then it's gone.

**Jon:** That's why we chose the suit.

**Vic:** Also because we wanted to look respectable; if we were dressed in heavy metal leather, people would say "Do these guys know what they're singing about?" We could be totally wrong, but we feel that the audience is taking us seriously because we've got this "classy" look.

**Drew:** It's a sad fact that, in 1984, the way you dress and the way you look people take as a reflection of you. You could be the most brilliant philosopher, but if you're dressed in grubby jeans and a torn T-shirt, people aren't going to think anything of you. That's great if you don't care what other people think, but being performers, we have to be concerned with how we are being taken by the people paying to see us.

**Warren:** What about your apparent avoidance of synthesizers? Is that intentional?

**Vic:** Our old bands were guitar bands. We feel that the essence of rock and roll is in the guitar; not the synthesizer.

**Jon:** But I can't see us avoiding synthesizers intentionally throughout the rest of our career. We have used piano on "None Too Soon" and there are some shots at the end of "One Night Stand".

**Drew:** It's not like we're gonna sit and go, "We're never going to use them." There might be a time where we would want some string effects or something.

**Vic:** We use the piano to add power and emphasis, but not as an up-front instrument.

**Drew:** There is a basic skeleton to rock and pop music: the guitar-bass-drums format. That's how we're happy and how we reproduce ourselves live. The primary colours.

**Vic:** Musicians have to work a little harder without synthesizers in that it's more difficult to keep a song smooth.

**Drew:** I think it helps us be more creative.

**Vic:** We write with bass, guitar and drums in mind.

**Warren:** Vic, your lyrics seem to be pretty bleak. Is there a reason for this?

**Vic:** As writers, we all have a certain way of looking at life. Most of my songs are bleak, but I wouldn't say that I'm a depressed person. When I write a song, I'm more comfortable in exploring the darker side of human nature, whereas Drew most of the time looks on the brighter side, and Jon, the mysterious side.

**Drew:** I think that's truer of the album and not more indicative of the way we're writing now.

**Vic:** I think I still find it that way with a lot of our stuff.

**Drew:** Really?!

**Vic:** Yeah, I still feel that way when I read the words to the songs we've written.

**Jon:** I can't think of too many optimistic songs that any of us have written.

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