



Begun as a "no wave" band, Sonic Youth are (l-r) Steve Shelly, Lee Renaldo, Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon.

## Sonic Youth finds 6 ways to tune a guitar

by Andrew M. Duke

Sonic Youth are four people who have an infatuation with Madonna, cult films, and radically tuned guitars. This New York band also has a new album out on SST Records entitled *Sister*.

As a tribute to Madonna, Sonic Youth recorded "Into the Groove(y)" under the guise of Ciccone Youth. A still from Richard Kern's film *Submit to Me* was used for the cover of their last LP, *EVOL* ("love" backwards).

Inspired by the Stooges, the Ramones, Patti Smith, Television, and the Velvet Underground, Sonic Youth began in 1981 as a "no wave" band, a reaction against musical constraints, along with others such as DNA and Glenn Branca. Guitarists Thurston Moore and Lee Renaldo, who played in Branca's band at one time, left to form Sonic Youth with bassist Kim Gordon and drummer Steve Shelley, who had also been performing in various groups.

Moore and Renaldo do not use conventional tuning: they prefer to make up their own. They use screwdrivers, drum sticks, broken bottles, and anything else that is near to force sounds from their guitars, and have over thirteen guitars set to five or six different tunings. Because different guitars are used for each song, if one gets stolen, they can no longer perform certain songs.

Their *Sister* LP features guitar that aches, whispers, grinds, growls, and squeaks. Vocalists

Moore and Gordon do not go for overblown vocal acrobatics, preferring to merely sing as they know how.

"Beauty Lies in the Eye" features Gordon alone on vocals, while Moore contributes vocals to the rest, excelling on "Pacific Coast Highway" with his hurtful "come on, baby". The pairing of the two works wonderfully on "Kotton Krown". Lyrics include

"Jesus had a twin who knew nothing about sin" and "He's got a fatal erection home in bed", but don't get Sonic Youth wrong.

They can also talk about beauty and sound a bit psychedelic, though here they try not to. On

*Sister*, a cover of Johnny Strike's 1976 "Hot Wire my Heart" and "Catholic Block" are the best of the best.



## Thrashing down with the Doves and Bedrock Vice

by Andrew M. Duke

The music the Thrashing Doves perform on their album *Bedrock Vice* (A&M) is hard to define. Pumped-up acoustic guitar, bass, and drums are nothing special, but while listening one might say, "Hey, isn't that . . . ?" as sounds appear that anyone from Depeche Mode to New Order to Jodi Watley to B.A.D. might use.

They are not, however, merely

stealing from other artists, as their spirit and subtle humour prove. "The Grinding Stone", with its simple, pleasing harmonies, the beauty of "Magdalena", and sarcastic wit found in "Jesus on the Payroll" show there is talent hiding behind their quirky yet accessible atmosphere.

Without a trademark sound, it is the voice of Ken Foreman, who must take lessons from the Violent Femmes' Gordon Gano, that holds this album together.

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