



## Storming the ramparts of knuckleheadism

by Hugh Hardy

I once said Mojo Nixon's music was "oceans away from being serious." Let me rephrase that: Mojo Nixon's music demystifies the image of the self-promoted "serious" artist.

The best way I can explain it, is like this: Lester Bangs wrote an article called "White Witch" for the October 1972 issue of *Creem* in which he discusses how even the most deified pop star can be brought down to their lowest common denominator by picturing them as a "dork, the one that used to sit in the seat right in front of you in Driver Training and fart all the time."

Think about it! Bono, Sinéad, Madonna, Mick, Morrissey, that goon from the Cult, all dropping in-class killers that could wilt a brick wall.

Mojo Nixon is the guy sitting in the back, laughing his guts out.

On the way upstairs at the El Mocambo, Mojo lets out a thundering belch. Sesto and I giggle like tourists. He sits down casually on a radiator in a hallway near the pissers.

**HH: Where's Skid?**

MN: Things just ran their course. We made five albums. There wasn't much else for me an' Skid to do musically, spiritually, creatively, albumly, live, whatever. It was over and I really wanted to do the band thing, he wanted to do a solo project. I've got this band from Texas, The Neptunes touring with me: piano player, bass player, and drummer. They're loud, they're young, they're drunk, they're full of jism!

**HH: Here's something . . . I call this method interviewing. (I hand him the front page of the Toronto Star, with a headline on the church protesting the Daylo Abortions/Fringe acquittal.)**

MN: (Reading paper) "MAN WHO CAUGHT FIRE IS DEAD." Damndest things happen!

**HH: Do you think there is a(n artist) responsibility factor involved?**

MN: No, not at all. I believe that as a human being, as a North American, as an adult, as a person on the planet, you have the responsibility, you have the DUTY to take the responsibility for your own life.

If you're over 18, you make the decision about what movies, what plays, what books, what artwork (you see), and what records you listen to.

Nobody's makin' anybody listen to Daylo Abortions. Nobody's makin' anybody buy certain records, or see certain films. If you don't like somethin', you don't have to go. If you don't like somethin' you see on the TV, or hear on the radio—CHANGE THE

FUCKING CHANNEL!

In America, they say this is a complicated issue. This isn't a complicated issue at all. (Either) you believe in freedom and liberty, and the rights of the individual, or you believe that Jesse Helms, and the Great Sunday School Teacher In-The-Sky have the right to tell you what to do. They don't have the right to tell you what to do. They don't have they right to tell my children what to do.

And as soon as they start takin' the Richard Pryor records from the stores . . . THE REBEL ALLIANCE WILL FORM, AND COME DOWN OUT OF THE HILLS OF WEST VIRGINIA, LEAD BY THE "MOJO COMMANDOS", AND THEY WILL BE SWINGIN' FROM LIGHT-POLES IN WASHINGTON D.C.!!!

**HH: Do you see yourself as being on a kind of crusade against this kind of stance?**

MN: Sure! I fight knuckleheadism at every turn!

**HH: Have you ever been afraid of not being taken seriously, or on the other hand, being taken too seriously?**

MN: The audience brings their perceptions to the show with or without whatever it is I'm thinking. Some people may say: "Louisiana Liplock is funny." That's fine. Or they may say: "Mojo said a political thing . . . Mojo's just crazy . . . Mojo's hot . . . Mojo's drunk". I don't think there is any reason to divorce humour from music. I don't think it has to be: either you talk

*The Light-On  
Back to my life as a pumpkin.  
But not the same old pumpkin,  
Though,  
This encounter dug the mush out of me;  
Carved me eyes and some teeth,  
And put a little light inside.  
The seeds I give to you.*

-P.D. Nyme



Photos by Sesto

about serious issues, or you're a frat-rocker. I'M A SERIOUSLY CRAZED FRAT-ROCKER!!!

**HH: In Rolling Stone (cringe!), they said music doesn't have to be "stupid" all the time. They said come on Mojo . . .**

MN: What that guy said was that he thought I should start writing songs that people don't feel guilty for listening to. I think that is what rock n' roll is all about. When you hear a song, and you know it's gonna kind of get your mom's pants in a bunch . . . a secret little pleasure: that's what rock n' roll is.

There's plenty of other good pop music, but that ain't rock n' roll. The guy from Rolling Stone can go kiss my ass.

**HH: Just out of curiosity, do you read Hunter S. Thompson? 'Cause I see you pick out quirky little aspects of American culture, and use them the way he did.**

MN: Hunter's a big influence, as is Richard Pryor.

**HH: Anybody else?**

MN: Hunter S. Thompson, Richard Pryor, John Lee Hooker, and . . .

(Author's note: At this point, some joker around the corner, I think it was the singer from the Dead Milkmen, yelled out "Debbie Gibson!", throwing everyone into fits of semi-inebriated laughter.)

MN: Debbie Gibson! You know there's kind of the NEW Debbie Gibson. The new, sexy, up-front, "ways-of-the-flesh" Debbie Gibson. And who can be held responsible

for that!?! ONLY ME!!!

**HH: You provoked her . . .**

MN: Provoked her? I did more than provoke her! I PROBED HER!!!

(Author's other note: At this point the conversation became diluted among everyone in the immediate area. For a second, I thought I should take a stand and say: "Hey! This is an interview!" But I quickly realized the mood was such that I could only hope to make myself into a complete asshole. Besides, it was too much fun. We pick up the questioning while we are discussing some fave acts of mine . . .)

**HH: Public Enemy?**

MN: Oh man! Me an' Chuck D need to go on Jesse Jackson's talk show and talk about Elvis. Chuck D's a lot like me. He's not a natural musician. He's a natural "stirrer-upper". Just the same way Rodney is. He just get's in there and stirs up everybody's shit, and makes 'em all mad at each other.

**HH: Did you take any (real) offence to the comments by P.E. or Living Color?**

MN: Nah, I didn't take any offense. I'd argue with 'em. We're talkin' about a guy that's been dead 10 years. Ain't no big deal. I would definitely argue with 'em. You bring Vernon and Chuck over, I'll get Country Dick in my corner and . . . WE'LL WRESTLE! Chuck's just a little guy, Vernon's kinda big though. I wouldn't wanna mess with him . . .