

ASEXUALS

On the pros and cons of death, rebirth, and our changing world

I went home the other night after the **ASEXUALS** show at Trina's and blew the dust off my old vinyl copy of the *Dead Kennedys' Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables* and put it on the turn table (for all you freshmen, a "turn table" is what we used to put vinyl record albums on). The little voice that talked to me as I did this hadn't cracked with puberty yet; had never smoked a cigarette, drunk a beer, or kissed a girl. Simpler times when not having money meant no video games. For old times sake I put on the headphones and cranked up *California Uber Ales* to the point of pain (considerably lower volume than it used to be). I needed to be reminded.

Music identifies us, places us in social categories, and stratifies society in concrete, measurable ways. Its progression is a blur of technology and attitude; it reflects the times, and because of this we become attached to music in specific and often intense ways. **Elvis**, the king, somehow went from a degenerate, lewd, gyrating demon corruptor of youth to commemorative ceramic plates and velvet black light paintings. I remember **Iggy Pop** in 1987 in Montreal yelling "Goodnight and God bless!" to a stunned, and suddenly very old audience. I was also at Trina's last Friday night when a band I last saw on a triple bill at the *Spectrum* in Montreal with **Tupelo Chain Sex** and **The Nils** began their show with an acoustic set.

The effect of this was like shifting into reverse instead of fifth while cruising comfortably down the TCH at, say, sixty-five miles per hour. I realize that it has been almost ten years, and I was ready for a change. Good heavens. **Metallica** meets **REM** was not what I was prepared for (bassist Dom Pompeo says "Basically, we wanted a record that sounded like a metal band playing Byrds covers...").

The **ASEXUALS** began with acoustic renditions of their tunes, and came back for a second set of electrified stuff. Then it was over. I honestly couldn't remember whether or not I had enjoyed myself, but I had this down-there-somewhere feeling that maybe I had. It was pop - that much I had absorbed. Now. It was Canadian pop. Good start. Where had I heard it before? It was louder and grimmer than **54 40**. It was relatively simplistic, and catchy (if you wake up the next day and have a tune running through your head and it's not immensely irritating, that says something - "Time Will Tell" did that to me).

So I went back on Saturday night to try and piece together an opinion.

Pros: Melodic, double-guitar distorted lines with catchy phrasing - witty lyrics (*Love Goes Plaid*, *Borderline*, and *World For The Taking* sparkle with odd humor) gutsy and heartfelt (if rangeless and powerless) lead vocals, interesting bass lines, and a good feel for hard core rhythm snippets.
 Cons: Mediocre stage presentation, messy song construction, and a definite and hard-edged indecisiveness as to what exactly the sound is supposed to be.

Charles Darwin would have loved this band. Evolution in the making - a genetic mistake that will take several generations to find it's ecological niche. That niche could easily be top forty Canadian pop. I hope not. There is much about this band that has guts and drive, and I would hate to think that they are simply getting old, tired, and sentimental. If the **ASEXUALS** want to make money and become mainstream, they will need a few things. Technically, the guitar work needs to clean up a bit - doubled melodies are fine, but both guys need to have a firm grip on what exactly the line is; again, this is a result of a curious mutation occurring as a result of a clash of format and style between what they were and whatever they are trying to become. That barrier is one that hopefully will not result in abandonment of one for the other, but a hybrid of both.

We could end up with one of two things here. The first is yet another Canadian sprout-eating (thanks, Lou) electric folk rock band like **54 40** and the *Grapes of Wrath* have become, or they may be at the head of a long-overdue revolution in Canadian music, the style and feel of which I can't predict, but which will hopefully soon replace a rapidly stagnating creativity in this country.

Age brings cynicism, and heightens the musical experiences of youth - I'm sure I will continue to pull out my CD remasters of **Black Flag** with sentimental glee, as my parents pull out *Jethro Tull*, and their parents moon over the *Andrews Sisters*. The world marches merrily on. The **ASEXUALS** have bowed to the changing times, and have entered their new world with exuberance and drive, and for now, have maintained their sense of humor.



Photo by Trina's