

Soul Asylum ready to become a household name

by Christopher Tait

Soul Asylum get no respect. Even critical acclaim from European and American music press can't help them.

Before they wrecked the Spectrum on Monday, Nov. 23, they held a press conference to talk about the new album, the upcoming tour, and to ask the question of why the marquee misspelled the band's name.

"SOLE ASYLUM? We ain't no

fish," was all drummer Grant Young could say, not before adding there apparently is a band in England with that name. Karl Mueller, bassist, could only reply: "That's fucking horrible."

From their original incarnation as Loud Fast Rules ten years ago, the band has moved through three chord punk to intricately orchestrated acoustic ballads such as "The Sunmaid."

On the new album, *Grave Dancers Union*, the band had the chance to work with legendary keyboardist

Booker T. Jones of Booker T. and The MGs. lead singer Dave Pirner had only praise for him, calling T. a "true musician" and "a thrill to work with." Pirner says it only took two run throughs for him to get his riff down perfect.

Pirner recently spent time in Toronto working with Crash Vegas on a song for the band's follow-up album to their successful *Red Earth*. The tune, "One Way Conversation," is an outtake from Soul Asylum's *And The Horses They Rode In On* album.

"I always meant for it to be sung by a girl, and sorry guys, but it sounds a hell of a lot better now than when we did it," said Pirner.

The soother sound of the new album has some critics crying "Mainstream," but the band doesn't feel that way. CBS spent more money on than they ever had, and therefore, more time in the studio. The first single, "Someone To Shove," is the first Soul Asylum song to receive airplay on commercial radio.

For Pirner and guitarist Dan

music

Soul Asylum
Grave Dancers Union
MCA Records

Murphy, their biggest thrill is receiving demo tapes from new bands.

"As soon as we get 'em, we run out and listen to them in the van. Sometimes they're shit and sometimes we're blown away."

They claim Toronto as their favorite city to play in, although after playing in Guelph a few years back, the sheer volume of the band caused the city to ban the venue from playing any rock shows.

They concluded with thoughts on their favorite drink, beer. And who makes the best beer, guys? Murphy didn't hesitate to reply, "Canada, eh!" although Pirner couldn't help adding "And Germany, and Austria, and New Zealand's not bad."

Maybe enough of the brew will help them forget about the misspelled sign.



Swallow this album and blow

by Prasad Bidaye

The most difficult thing about reviewing Swallow is avoiding comparisons to others. This duo from Britain composed of Mike Mase and Louise Trehy is 4AD's (ethereal label extraordinaire) fresh promise of the season. *Blow* indicates influences and parallels with My Bloody Valentine, (not another one) Cocteau, but is above all the most refreshing of them.

Trehy's lyrical ideas are immersed in the thoughts of love and relationships on the spiritual and sensual level, occasionally incorporating the elements of illusion and nature. Her vocals are elevating, sweetly and characteristically comprehensible. At times she sings not for the sake of message but for livening the whirlpool of guitar noise and ambient soundscapes.

Guitar tremolo is perhaps the foundation of 4AD etherealism, as well as its weakness. Curve are a

tunes Swallow
Blow
Polygram Records

good example, Swallow is not. The sounds on *Blow* are dynamic and distinguishable for each song, where Mase's guitar work ranges from deep drones to ocean-like washes to gentle arpeggios to what must be the sharp breaking of his strings. But often it is difficult to pinpoint the nature of the performing instruments, as the guitars and the keyboards are so well fused in the mix. Mase concentrates more on arranging a stimulus rather than bass-drum-guitar-vox tokenism of instruments.

Swallow is doomed to suffer comparisons, and that is all they've received in the UK. But that probably has more to do with the influx of this scene and not the album. For those who are sick of 4AD, *Blow* is to be swallowed.

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