

# Squirrel, not just for roadkill anymore

by Roland Stone

Prior to actually hearing this tape, I had been bombarded with so much hype about Squirrel, that I was beginning to doubt if I would be able to remain objective while reviewing their tape. However, having listened to *at the Gas Station* a number of times, I have overcome this doubt

and am ready to give an honest review of this release as there are things about the material which I like, as well as things that I don't.

**Squirrel  
at the Gas Station  
Independent**

For those not yet familiar with Squirrel, they are a Toronto-based band featuring two former veterans

of the Halifax music scene, Steve Keeping (Killer Klams) on drums and Dave Schellenberg (Jellyfish-babies) on bass.

To begin, there are seven songs on this demo release, and most of them are structurally very good. The band has a unique sound that is reminiscent of earlier Sonic Youth in places. The second song, "Charge", exhibits

this similarity the most, though the comparison is not meant to discredit the song itself. It is a moody and passionate experience, and features an utterly killer time change. Similarly, the songs "Drip" and "Whipping Boy" are based on power as well as thoughtful and creative songwriting.

The opening track, "Husha Husha", unfortunately does not share the same level of intensity. In fact the whole song revolves around a

ideas, particularly in the area of lyrics and songs, but his voice is off-key a lot of the time. Not that vocals necessarily make or break a band. In fact, on the heavier tunes, they complement the material in the same way that Henry Rollins's voice works in the guitar-heavy material that he produces. But Rollins would probably never attempt a ballad.

With the creative integrity and originality demonstrated in Squirrel's music, this band not only needs,

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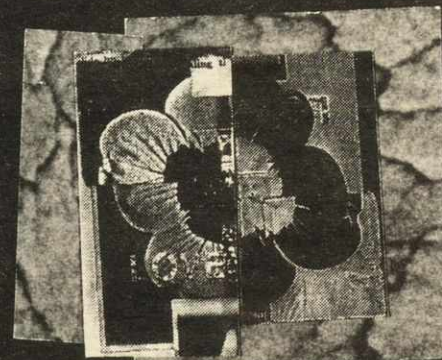


somewhat boring guitar riff, but the melody line that lead guitarist Rudy Mental plays during the chorus is pretty catchy and tends to stick in one's head. It's a good tune but is rather simplistic when compared to the rest of the songs on this release.

The remaining three songs are somewhat more melodic than the others and give an indication of some of the members' folk roots. These tunes are all pretty good but lead me to my major complaint about this band: the vocals leave something to be desired and bring down the potential quality of some of the tunes. Vocalist, lyricist and main songwriter, Bradley McInnis, has great original

but deserves a vocalist that really smokes. Maybe there aren't any in Toronto, I don't know. If not, then I would suggest some serious vocal lessons. In any case, for a band that has only been an entity for about ten months, they have a lot of potential and can only improve. This is a decent and recommended recording that warrants more than a few listens, and they are probably a pretty heavy live act. In fact, if my personal opinion about the vocals hasn't deterred you, then you can witness the band this weekend at the Double Deuce with Cool Blue Halo. I know I'll be there.

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