



# The Process of Evolution: an interview with the Grace Babies

BY GORD ROSS

Spawned in Halifax in 1994 by Damion Dunphy and Kevin Hilliard, *The Grace Babies* have wasted no time getting noticed. From their first release *Duct Tape* (1994), they have been receiving positive attention. After signing with No Records in 1995, they released their debut CD *Lure*, which, like its predecessor, lit up the college charts. While continually allowing their sound to evolve, the *Grace Babies* have toured with a lot of great Canadian bands like *Furnaceface* and *Wide Mouth Mason*; gathering important experience and expanding their fan-base. The band also includes Stu Whitehead and Chris Loane.

The guys pulled up to the Tim Horton's in Sackville, NB in a noisy, black, converted OPP van, stopping for our interview on the way to their next tour stop in St. John, NB. If their latest album, *Frequency* is any indication, the path is just beginning. On *Frequency*, the band's trademark catchiness has been refined with intelligent lyrics and more musical synchronicity. Fresh off their previous show the night before at the Grawood, the guys seemed tired, but pleased with the way things were going. After eyeing the long line for coffee, we decided that we might as well start into an interview. The following are some highlights of my chat with the *Grace Babies*.

**Gazette:** Who does your songs, is it a collaboration or just one individual?

Damion: There's a lot less collaboration than there was in the

beginning. As we learn more about song-writing, we need less help with the basics. So, instead of bringing in ideas and jamming out a song, now it's like somebody is bringing in a song and we work out the nuances. Mostly, now someone will bring a song to the table and we'll work with it. Sometimes we use it sometimes we don't.

**Are you guys always looking for new stuff?**

Damion: Yeah, we're always ready to give something a shot, even if you don't necessarily hear it right away. You've got to remember, you're hearing the origins, the very basics of the song. So, even if you don't hear it right off, you've got to give them [band members] the benefit of the doubt. **Where do most of the band's song ideas come from?**

Damion: We all draw from different experiences.

Kevin: Well, Stu writes exclusively about racing and

relationships related to racing!

Damion: I find a lot of the songs I write are about reactions to different events in life, or about life in general.

**Where do you see yourselves in 5 years?**

Damion: I don't know. I guess we really don't look that far ahead. There's a lot going on with us right now.

**How do you like travelling?**

Damion: It's great, the only bad thing is that we don't have time to

minute tape that just has "I'm all outta love" by Air Supply over and over and over.

Damion: You haven't pulled that out yet this tour.

Chris: Thank god!

**Do you guys model yourselves after anybody?**

Damion: The only way that we would ever do that would be in terms of the where they've got and how they've [made it] there. We're not like a lot of other bands. We don't make compromises... they're

Stu couldn't say "wings" and ended up just waving his arms like a bird.

Damion: It's definitely good for a laugh.

**Which do you enjoy more, studio work or touring?**

Damion: They're both rewarding. The thing about touring is that playing live is the greatest thing. It's fantastic... it's an immediate rush, it's adrenalin, you're getting it, whereas the studio is more slow paced and calculated.

**If somebody was to have their first taste of the Grace Babies, would you suggest that they buy your album or see you first?**

Damion: I'd say either way, you're all right. I think one thing that we've accomplished is a real symbiosis between those two things.

**What's going on with you and Shoreline Records?**

Damion: They're just new. We're actually only their second release. It's an excellent small

label... small but mighty! They're really taking care of us.

Kevin: They're an indie label that operates like a major label.

**Which band have you most liked playing with?**

Damion: I'm pretty sure that Chris would say *Wide Mouth Mason*.

Chris: For sure!

Damion: For me, it might have to be them [*Wide Mouth Mason*] too, because the promoters are treating us incredibly well. And the *Wide Mouth* guys are great, aside from being smokin' musicians.

Kevin: I'd have to say *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

Damion: That is so true. They actually siphoned gas for us from their own van when we ran out.

Kevin: You don't get much sweeter than that.

Damion: We've really enjoyed all the bands we've toured with.

*End of discussion. Grace Babies have to peel.*



The Grace Babies bring pop to the Grawood. Photo by Ryan Lash

enjoy any of the places we visit. We spend a lot of our time in the van.

**You don't mind spending that much time in the van?**

Damion: It's actually not that bad. Just the other day we finished construction of the bunk. Plus, with Kevin's excellent DJing skills, no one is ever bored. **I'd imagine you guys make a lot of mixed tapes for the road?**

Kevin: Oh yeah, I've got a torture tape set up. It's a thirty

unnecessary. I love this, this is what I want to do, and I believe that's an ethic shared by all the guys. We work our tails off and it keeps getting harder.

**Any good tour stories?**

Chris: I think the best would be Stu's lack of speech.

Kevin: Yeah, sometime last week Stu lost the ability to form a lot of words. It only happens every once in a while, but it happens at the funniest times.

Chris: Like at wing night, when

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