

The Final Cut

Plotting world domination from Altoona

Otherwise, CD/Tape/Culture analysis and commentary with D'Scribe, D'Drummer, Da Boy, D'Sebastiano's Doorman, Da Common Man, D' Big Man, AI, D'Pebble, Da Beer God and other assorted riff raff,

D'RATING SYSTEM:

9.1-10.0 Excellent - BUY OR DIE!	4.1-5.0 Incompetent - badly flawed
8.1-9.0 Very good - worth checking out	3.1-4.0 Bad - mostly worthless
7.1-8.0 Good but nothing special	2.1-3.0 Terrible - worthless
6.1-7.0 Competent but flawed	1.1-2.0 Horrible - beyond worthless
5.1-6.0 Barely competent	0.1-1.0 Bottom of the cesspool abomination!

I GUESS THIS ISSUE IS A LITTLE BIT LATE... I can't offer any excuses, except that things at Cut headquarters have been hellaciously busy over the past few months, affording yours truly very little time to sit down and get this tome written up. But do not despair, this rag will continue on, even if only 3 or 4 times a year. But we'll try to get it out a little more frequently, if our schedules allow us. Hopefully the contents within this issue are worth the long wait.

SINCE IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME BETWEEN ISSUES, I have built up a ton of takes I have to get out of my system, so please bear with me and deal with it...

FIRST, MEMO TO THE ALTOONA CLUB SCENE: Stop the DAMN FIGHTING! Just about every 'Toona live music nightspot has endured at least one slobberknocker in recent months, and it has to end! The post-Halloween Party free-for-all at Pellegrine's was total BULLS**T!!! Because of idiots fighting, one nightspot is facing a five-figure lawsuit settlement and is in danger of closing down! MEMO TO 'TOONA CLUB OWNERS: Get tough on the idiots who start this crap – follow Peter C's lead, and install a fixed camera or cameras, hook them up to a VCR, and record each night's proceedings, so when trouble does occur, you can pick out the idiots responsible for instigating it, and BAN THEM FROM YOUR ESTABLISHMENT! And MEMO TO IDIOTS WITH SHORT FUSES: If you are prone to throwing fists at the least little provocation, do us all a huge favor and STAY THE HELL HOME! We don't need your fighting bulls**t polluting our music scene. Just do us all a favor and stay away – join a boxing club, a toughman contest, shadow box, join the WWF, etc. – just keep your fists out of our live music scene!

DOES ANYBODY ELSE NOTICE THIS, but is this current obsession with cellular phones getting a bit out of hand? Okay, cell phones are good to have in your car in the case of a breakdown, accident or other emergency. I'm down with that. In our modern-day society, cell phones serve many useful purposes. If you are using a cell

phone for its designed purpose, that's cool. But then I see people yacking away on the damn things while they are trying to maneuver a car on rush-hour I-99. Bad idea. And some countries have banned cell phone use while driving, due to compromised safety by drivers concentrating more on their cell phone conversation than on their driving. And then recently, while working my former Coconuts gig, I attempted to exercise customer service on some lady who came in the store, yacking away on her cell phone. The lady kept gabbing on the cell phone even while trying to ask me to locate a Brittany Spears album for her daughter, and had the phone glued to her ear even as she fumbled for her money at the checkout counter. Lady, was that phone conversation really just so darned important that you couldn't put the phone down even when I was counting your change at the counter? Ridiculous!

College Football '99 Season, take 12...Now that Penn State's 1999 National Championship campaign has fallen down the sink hole against Minnesota and...ulp...Michigan, I know this may sound like sour grapes, but I honestly didn't let myself get caught up in the national championship hoopla this year. I knew the Big Ten Conference wasn't going to be a cakewalk, and the odds were against anybody running the table, even though Penn State and Michigan both did it in recent years. Bottom line – the Big Ten Conference is the toughest conference in college football this year, BAR NONE, evidenced by the fact that as of this date, Nov. 13, eight of the Big Ten's eleven teams are still in the hunt for post-season bowl games! I knew the odds were against Penn State getting through the Big Ten unblemished, and my fears rang true – the conference is too tough this year. Sucks for us. Memo to Joe Paterno and the Lion coaching staff, now that two supposed "championship" contender teams have gone South in November in three years – let's forget about national championships and get away from the hoopla, and get back to basics...concentrate on winning ONE GAME AT A TIME, and quit putting all the marbles into the national championship scenario. Take care of winning each single game at hand, and if you take care of business each week, the championship stuff takes care of itself. Penn State was riding so high on the championship thing that when Minnesota derailed it, the Lions went in the tank the next week against Michigan. Yes, D'Drummer, I'll surrender the case of M-G-D to you, but at least the Lions showed up this year, and had they stayed the entire 60 minutes, they could have won the game.

As for the Steelers, HAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!! I'm a Black & Gold fan, but this year the Steelers SUCK!!! As far as who I think may be playing on Super Sunday in January, I'd like to see Doug Flutie get there and give Buffalo the "W" Jim Kelly never could deliver – perhaps against the St. Louis Rams or whoever emerges to capture the NFC this year – nobody has looked that impressive thus far. Like Jim Rome says, parity in the NFL sucks. We'll wait and see.

One more sports take...sort of – if you consider figure skating a sport (Jim Rome has some interesting takes on this subject). Anyway, I recently was channel-surfing one night, and came across E! Entertainment Television's Hollywood's True Stories program, which this night was about the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan fiasco surrounding the 1994 Olympics – you know, where members of Tonya's camp clubbed Nancy's knee to try to put her out of the U.S. Nationals so Tonya could win. It was tabloid fodder for most of 1994, and single-handedly turned women's figure skating into one of the nation's most-watched sporting events. Anyway, I found out a few interesting things during this program – while the actual assailants (Tonya's ex-husband, Jeff Gilooly, and his hired thugs) are already out of jail and have moved on with their lives and careers, Tonya was blacklisted by the skating world – not just banned from amateur competition, but not even allowed on the ice with other sanctioned skaters; in a nutshell, prohibited from earning a living skating. The program depicted that Tonya pretty much took the fall for the whole thing, even

though it was never proven she even knew about the plot against Kerrigan until after it occurred. Five years of international embarrassment, humiliation and exile, plus the hefty fines which have left her near penniless, seems like punishment enough. Convicted killers and rapists freed from prison get better treatment and a second chance; Tonya Harding paid her price. Reinstate her into skating, at least the professional or non-competitive ranks. The continued exile and blacklisting now is just overkill.

One more take...I know it is local, and I hate to hack on it, but after two months of reading it on the comics page of the Altoona Mirror, I have reached a clear and inescapable conclusion...Rice Boy sucks. Okay, the cartoon artwork itself isn't bad, but the plot seems clueless and stupid. Does anybody seriously read this thing? Nosy Final Cut minds would like to know...

On with the d'reviews...



QUEENSRYCHE – Q2K (Atlantic) It should be no secret to the Cut readership that Queensrÿche is my favorite band. I guess most in-the-know Queensrÿche fans will concur that the group's peak period of popularity was from The Warning through Empire, including the legendary zenith, Operation: Mindcrime. But Queensrÿche continues to intrigue me because none of their albums treads water or lives on past glories. This band has never been about repeating hit singles or mainstream success; their biggest hit single, "Silent Lucidity," was the right song at the right time, but was not created to be a radio or MTV hit. Each new Queensrÿche album is distinctively Queensrÿche, but develops its own personality and statement of what this Seattle band is about at any given period in time. Such is the case with the new 'Rÿche disc, Q2K. Unlike its predecessors, Q2K finds Queensrÿche in a rare state of change on several fronts. First, Q2K follows Queensrÿche's first-ever personnel change, as former Candlebox producer Kelly Gray replaces Chris DeGarmo as half of the 'Rÿche guitar tandem. Q2K also finds Queensrÿche with a new record label, as Atlantic has picked up the group in the wake of EMI's demise. So as the name might suggest, Q2K signifies new beginnings for Queensrÿche. And to that end, the sound is different here, but in a good way. This is still undeniably Queensrÿche – singer Geoff Tate still sounds like Geoff Tate, and for the most part, Queensrÿche's trademark progressive modernistic crunch is intact, and even edgier here. Q2K sounds futuristic, utilizing a bit more studio technology and a consistently harder edge. But the base strengths remain intelligent songcraft and cerebral lyricism; melodies and words whose total impact is felt after several listens and dissections. Queensrÿche's musical magic remains their attention to depth and detail. Vocals and vocal harmonies are layered. Guitars and guitar harmonies are layered. Queensrÿche's sound just comes at you on several different planes, with just about every moment of every song holding some nuance or variation that keeps you cemented to the album from start to finish. Yet Queensrÿche succeeds at crafting ornate melodies using this depth and detail, and just about every song on Q2K stands solidly on its own as a mini-masterpiece. While Queensrÿche was more vocal about the state of our troubled world on previous albums, here the lyrics seem more philosophic and personal, as the group explores idiosyncrasies in their own personalities and relationships. The first radio single from the album, "Breakdown,"

examines the boiling point that drives somebody off the deep end. The second single, the opening track "Falling Down," is about a more gradual breakdown brought about by the apparent ending of a relationship. Then there's the slower and sturdy "One Life," exploring the simplicity of 'one,' and how one...one life, one thought, one meaning, one dream...shapes...one world. In the spirit of "Silent Lucidity," Queensrÿche gives us two more tunes exploring the inner mind – "Liquid Sky" and "The Right Side Of My Mind." Other tunes, like the tribal-flavored "Sacred Ground" and the uptempo "Burning Man," are more spiritual in lyrical flavor. Kelly Gray's impact is clearly felt upon the Queensrÿche sound, and the guitars display more sting and aggression than we have heard from camp Rÿche in some time. This is an edgier Queensrÿche, moreso than on Promised Land or Hear in the Now Frontier. Queensrÿche embraces a new frontier on Q2K, and the change in guitar player and record label seems to have refreshed them. Q2K won't replace Mindcrime as my favorite Queensrÿche disc, but it is still an album that will do a lot of time in my CD player in the future. Q2K is Queensrÿche's new beginning, an impressive advent of a new Rÿche...BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.1/10.0

DEF LEPPARD – EUPHORIA (Mercury) Any regular Final Cut readers should well remember what happened the last time the words "Def Leppard" passed through the pages of this glorious rag...The Leps' last album, 1997's Slang, was the worst waste of plastic bearing the Def Leppard name ever. Slang's problem was simple - Def Leppard tried to be something they were not - 90's modern rock wannabees. They abandoned what they were, to try to be something they were not. So my feelings were very mixed when word came out that the Leps were set to release a new album, Euphoria. Would Def Leppard continue to circle the drain like they did on Slang, or would they get back to making sincere music again? The advance radio single, "Promises," gave me hope that the latter would be the case. And the good news is that Euphoria does return Def Leppard back close to their pre-Slang form. Though Mr. Shania Twain, Robert John "Mutt" Lange, didn't produce the album (he does help out with backing vocals), the band and co-producer Pete Woodroffe return to that magical Hysteria-era sound on Euphoria. The hit single "Promises" itself sounds like it could have been lifted from the Hysteria sessions! Likewise with "Guilty." "21st Century Sha La La La Girl" recalls "Pour Some Sugar On Me," and the current single "Paper Sun" might segue comfortably between "Foolin'" and "Too Late For Love." There's driving rockers like the opener "Demolition Man," "Kings Of Oblivion" and the instrumental "Disintegrate" which hint at the On Through The Night/High and Dry period, and the Gary Glitter-like "Back In Your Face," which seems to slam the exclamation point on the fact that Def Leppard is back where they should be and rocking once again. Though I didn't like it at first, the funky "All Night" with its catchy chorus is growing on me. For me, the only weak spots here are the power ballads "Goodbye," "It's Only Love" and "To Be Alive;" all a little heavy on the syrup and lacking the conviction of earlier Lep ballads like "Love Bites." Okay, Euphoria isn't quite a High and Dry, Pyromania, or Hysteria, but it is the best thing bearing the Def Leppard name to emerge since that peak period in the group's career. And for me, Euphoria goes a good way toward atoning for the sins of Slang. Def Leppard sounds like Def Leppard again. Rejoice! RATING 8.7/10.0

COLLECTIVE SOUL – DOSAGE (Atlantic) When you think of 90's rock and the artists that defined this decade, Collective Soul may not appear on your top five list. But each of their albums thus far has produced memorable hits we can hum in our sleep, whether "Shine" or "Gel" or "Where The River Flows" or others. Collective Soul has quietly emerged into a 90's superstar force with a distinct, unmistakable sound

and style that others emulate. But on the group's latest disc, Dosage, it sounds as though the hit-making well might be running dry. Collective Soul attempts to stretch their style and sound here, and the results overall lack the crispness and freshness of their earlier groundbreaking efforts like Hints, Allegations and Things Left Unsaid and their self-titled disc. Collective Soul's sound takes a deeper and more serious turn here, as the group's lyrics turn more reflective and introspective through cumbersome ballads like "Needs," "Dandy Life," "Run" and "Not The One." The brightest moments on Dosage are the uptempo moments – namely, the opening track "Tremble For My Beloved," the catchy hit single "Heavy," the current single "No More, No Less," "Slow," "Generate," and the slow-building "Compliment." Also good is the closing ballad, "Crown," slightly suggestive of the group's earlier hit "The World I Know" or Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb." Collective Soul seems to rely too heavily on electronics to get the job done here, and Dosage sounds robotic, assembly-line manufactured and over-produced. For the most part, Collective Soul sounds soul-less. Collective Soul is one of my favorite bands to emerge from the 90's, but Dosage is a disappointment – lacking the spark and excitement that drew my interest to this band to begin with. Only diehard fans will appreciate this Dosage of Collective Soul. RATING 6.2/10.0

SOULFLY – SOULFLY (Roadrunner) A brief history lesson...After attaining worldwide success with recent albums like Roots and Chaos A.D., Sepultura experienced a major rift...Singer Max Cavalera parted ways with the group after the rest of Sepultura fired Max's wife, who was their manager. From the split arises Max's new project, Soulfly, and this self-titled disc. Coupled with the split from Sepultura was some personal tragedy for Max, with the sudden death of his friend and stepson, Dana Wells. The result is an impassioned, emotion-packed Soulfly debut, where we hear Max dealing with some of these issues over an expectedly terse and brash metallic backdrop. Soulfly's base sound seems to pick up where Max had left off on Sepultura's Roots - heavy, volatile metal with a tribal, worldbeat edge. But like his work in Sepultura, Max takes extreme-flavored metal to the next level here, with intense lyrics dealing with several things. Addressing the split with Sepultura is the angry opening track "Eye For An Eye," where Max blames the split on envy, offers a hope to "reunite the tribe," and establishes that with Soulfly he is born again. Max deals with the death of Dana on "Bleed" (with Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst and DJ Lethal) and "First Commandment," angrily declaring that those responsible for his death will ultimately get theirs in due time. In a less angry vein, Max and Soulfly celebrate the lives of fallen friends with their instrumental title track "Soulfly," recorded outside the studio one night - according to Max's liner notes, "We jammed straight from our hearts." Other tunes find Max and Soulfly celebrating Brazilian folklore and heritage; "Tribe" is a tribal chant-gear song of unity, while "Bumba" and "Quilombo" celebrate freedom and liberation. Other interesting tracks include "Umbabarauma," about a star soccer player; "Prejudice," declaring that hatred is the "shame of all nations;" and two apparent band manifestos in "The Song Remains Insane," which celebrates Max's Sepultura past; and "No," a song of defiance against trendiness, phoniness and the status quo. Max and his new bandmates - guitarist Jackson Bandeira, bassist Marcello D. Rapp and drummer Roy Mayorga - fire it off fast and furious in the best tradition of Max's former bandmates. And like Sepultura, Max and Soulfly effectively flavor their brash metallic maelstrom with a worldbeat presence, mixing in tribal beats, percussion, chants and native folklore. Though I haven't heard the new post-Max Sepultura disc, it would appear by the sound of Soulfly that Sepultura's soul departed with Max Cavalera, and has manifested itself in this project. Sepultura fans will find plenty to cheer about here, as well as anyone who seeks heavy metal with a soul and a conscience. This soul is

flying high...Soulfly is definite BUY OR DIE!!
RATING 9.4/10.0

DRAIN STH – FREAKS OF NATURE (The Enclave/MVG) The first album, Horror Wrestling, was a curiosity – a freak of nature, if you will. Four young, attractive Swedish women, cranking out savage-sounding metallic rock that knocked most of their male rock peers on their collective asses. In these freaky 90's, Drain STH was another apparent freakshow, another quarky product of this decade's no-holds-barred rock scene. But on the follow-up album, Freaks Of Nature, Drain STH shows that indeed they are not a novelty, but a modern-metal force to be taken seriously. The songwriting is more consistent and improved, and the group expands their repertoire from female grunge to dabbling in cyber metal, hip hop and ballads. Singer Maria Sjöholm, guitarist Flavia Canel, bassist Anna K and drummer Martina Axén blaze a wall of sound here, underscored by booming rhythms, powered by crash-and-burn guitar chord riffage, and topped by layered, siren-like vocals and two- and three-part vocal harmonies. There are numerous highlights on Freaks Of Nature, including the leadoff track and first single from the album, "Enter My Mind," with its weighty, intense choruses; "Alive;" the catchy and clever "Simon Says" with its slight hip-hop lean; the acoustic-edged "I Wish;" the slightly lighthearted "The Bubble Song;" and heavy, leaden assaults like "Crave;" "Get Inside" and "I Will Follow." Drain STH's shadowy lyrics try to explain emotions and hidden feelings, trying to explore the cracks and crevices of the human persona. But most importantly, this album ROCKS unapologetically, pounding a unique sound and niche of its own along the way. Obviously, Drain STH is a unique phenomenon in the world of rock, and Freaks Of Nature is their way of celebrating their uniqueness – a thorough, aural butt-kicking that answers the questions Horror Wrestling might have raised – mainly, that four attractive young women from Sweden can rumble your speakers with the nastiest of the metal boys out there, 'nuff said!
RATING 9.0/10.0

BLACK CROWES - BY YOUR SIDE (CBS) Over the course of their discography so far, the Black Crowes have done things their way, giving us the fruits of their creativity and inspiration at any given point in time during their career. Their first two breakthrough albums, Shake Your Money Maker and The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion, laid the groundwork with passionate blues-driven rock. Recent albums have found the Crowes indulging their folksier side, with more acoustic-gearred numbers and ballads. On the Crowes' latest, By Your Side, they have come back full circle, giving us the hardest rocking disc since the first two. The Crowes get down to business early, opening with the action-packed racing rocker "Go Faster" – one of the best cruisin' tunes I've heard in a long time – the chorus lyrics of "Can you make this thing go faster" heard in the proximity of a gas pedal can produce combustible results! "Kickin' My Heart Around" is the type of Southern-styled ass-kicking we knew the Crowes still had in them, while the title song "By Your Side" is Stones-styled swagger reminiscent of "Jealous Again." The heavy and soulful "HorseHead" and "Heavy" sandwich the slightly milder radio single "Only A Fool;" all three are excellent displays of Crowes rock and roll soul, topped with gospel-like chorus harmonies. After the bluesy ballad "Welcome to the Goodtimes," another highlight - the charged and electrified "Go Tell The Congregation," where the Crowes tap a Motown influence and go full-out soulful! There's the sweet and soulful ballad "Diamond Ring," underscored by some very tasty Hammond B-3 organ fills. By Your Side finishes strong as well, with two muscular blues-rockers in "Then She Said My Name" and "Virtue and Vice." By Your Side is everything a Black Crowes fan could ask for, as the group goes back to what worked on the first two albums; they tap

that late 60's/early 70's Stones/Small Faces/Humble Pie blues- and soul-based rock vein, flavored with a gospel-like personality, and Chris Robinson's impassioned and intense bluesy howl. For me, By Your Side is easily the best thing the Crowes have put out since Southern Harmony, and it is easily one of my favorite albums of the year thus far. It's great to hear the Black Crowes rocking out again! Definite BUY OR DIE!
RATING 9.6/10.0

SCORPIONS - EYE II EYE (Koch) I guess it stands to reason...Def Leppard righted their ship after the disastrous Slang CD with their strong comeback disc, Euphoria...And Iron Maiden dumped singer Blaze Bayley after two horrid albums, and reunited with their bread-and-butter lead voice, Bruce Dickinson...So I guess it was another legendary metal band's turn to go in the tank and deliver this year's ALBUM THAT SUCKS. Enter the Scorpions. I've been a Scorps fan going back to the Tokyo Tapes days BEFORE they were superstars. I even praised their recent 90's efforts, Pure Instinct and Face The Heat, even though the group was slowing down and showing signs of stagnation. But I became suspicious upon hearing the leadoff single, the funky and modernish "Mysterious," from the Scorps' new plastic, Eye II Eye. This tune, while ultimately listenable, was a clear departure from the straight-ahead metallic crunch these German rockers are famous for. And upon listening to Eye II Eye in its entirety, my worst fears are confirmed...The Scorpions try to sound hip, with horrid results. In a nutshell, Eye II Eye is to the Scorpions what Slang was to Def Leppard - the sounds of a band no longer on top, grasping at straws to find a fresh "hip" sound to put them back on top. Like the Leps did on Slang, Scorpions here give us a plethora of electronic dance beats, synth-laden ballads, and even touches of hip-hop and rap. I guess I should have been tipped off by the photo of the band on the back cover - four of the five Scorps are now short-hairs, wearing shades and doing their best Rammstein poses. Anyway, to the disaster within...After "Mysterious" opens the album, the laughable "To Be No. 1" - Apparently an ode to Bill Clinton, the song's first verse is underscored with synth-tinged dance beats reminiscent of the Pac-Man arcade game, before the Scorpions try to justify the tune with a crunch-chord-laced chorus...Yeah, Scorps, we believe you...right. The midsection of the disc is weighed down by a succession of mild-mannered, very UN-Scorpion-like synth ballads and pop - suggesting that the group's 1990 end-of-Cold-War breakthrough ballad hit, "Wind Of Change," may have been the worst thing to ever happen to this band, because it gave the Scorpions the false delusion that they could be pop stars. Only the crunchy and thundering tribal-beat rocker "Mind Like A Tree" breaks up the monotony of dull synth-powered tunes like "Obsession," "10 Light Years Away," the title song "Eye To Eye," "What U Give U Get Back," "Skywriter" (salvageable because of a tasty Rudy Schenker mid-song guitar solo) and "Yellow Butterfly." The latter section of the album rebounds slightly, with the funky hip-hop-laced crunch of "Freshly Squeezed," the bubblegummy rocker "Priscilla," the curious bi-lingual German/English funk/rap/dance metal number "Du Bist So Schmutzig," and a melodic rocker, "Aleyah," before closing with the sad and schmaltzy Klaus Meine piano ballad "A Moment In A Million Years." I don't begrudge the Scorpions for trying to turn a new leaf or for attempting something different, but here it simply doesn't work. Klaus Meine's understated vocals sound out of place through this un-Scorpionlike brand of 90'ish rock. And Rudy Schenker and Matthias Jabs - lead guitarists by tradition - are old dogs trying to learn new tricks, and sound like they are bored just filling with sporadic chords and understated rhythm guitar bursts through the majority of this album. There are a few promising moments during Eye II Eye, but overall, I'm not sold on this new Scorpions sound, and bottom line - Scorpions fans weaned on Lovedrive, Animal Magnetism and Savage Amusement likely won't be sold on this, either. It's possible that the likely flop of this

album on record store shelves could light a fire under the Scorps' collective butts to come back with a renewed sense of rocking urgency the next time around. But for the moment, Eye II Eye is the worst travesty to pass through the Final Cut CD player so far this year. Avoid a similar travesty, and do not allow the Scorpions' latest to pass through yours.

RATING 4.2/10.0

JETHRO TULL – J-TULL-DOT-COM (Fuel 2000) During my high school and college years, I was a big Jethro Tull fan. Aqualung, Warchild, Minstrel In The Gallery, and especially the 1977 double live set Bursting Out...Jethro Tull has always been an acquired taste, but a taste I did acquire and appreciate. But as we entered the 80's, Tull faded from the limelight, relegated to "old fart" status by the modern rock movement, surfacing back into the limelight only when they won the Hard Rock Grammy several years ago to Metallica's chagrin. If you would have told me that now, heading into the new millennium, Jethro Tull was issuing a new album that would re-ignite my interest in them, I would lifted a cynical "People's Eyebrow" in your general direction. But it has happened...Jethro Tull has given us a new album, J-Tull Dot Com. Upon hearing the first radio single from the album, "Spiral," I was not impressed; the song sounded like Ian Anderson and co. trying to recapture past glories. But after listening to the whole album, it turns out "Spiral" is the weakest song on the album, and most of the rest of this is clever, alluring and captivating. In a nutshell, the best Jethro Tull album in years! All the elements that constitute an excellent Tull album are here...Front and foremost, of course, minstrel Ian Anderson. Tull's longtime leader, Ian's almost-Shakespearean vocal presence and flute flavorings are as prevalent as ever. Ian's style remains unique, articulate, whimsical, and ultimately alluring and captivating throughout the album. On first listen, I thought a few of his premises and ideas were silly, but on second, third, fourth and fifth listens, the man's wizardry with both music and lyrics kicks in fully! Musically, Ian, longtime guitarist Martin Barre, keyboardist Andrew Giddings, bassist Jonathan Noyce and drummer Doane Perry fuse together elements of rock, jazz, classical, folk, and even Celtic and Far-Eastern flavorings into a collective sound that breaks new ground, yet remains undeniably Jethro Tull. Besides the musical tapestry Jethro Tull lays down through the album's course, the other true artistry here is lyrics - Ian Anderson has always been a master with words, from clever symbolism to double entendres and more. As the title might indicate, the central theme of J-Tull Dot Com is coming to grips with the modern computer age, and the ups and downs of life in the modern age. After "Spiral" opens the album, the Far Eastern-flavored "Dot Com" – the apparent title song – is about the cyber age, where the whole world is our community and cyber souls from around the globe can communicate via the Internet. "Awol" references a "one-day stand," made possible through the modern miracle of e-mail. "Wicked Windows" depicts an adult's tainted perspective of the world as a result of childhood hardship. The harder-rocking "Hunt By Numbers" is a symbolic ode to nocturnal skirt-chasing, while "Hot Mango Flush" freezes a moment in time from the bar scene in general. The latter tune, with its jazz/worldbeat-type flavor, is probably the closest Ian Anderson has ever come to rapping, as he voices eloquent beat-poetry-like lyrical narrative. Also clever is "El Nino," about how the information age has created a meteorological monster that is blamed for natural disasters and global economic problems. "Black Mamba" is more playful Ian Anderson symbolism, likening a seductress to a venomous slithering reptile – how appropriate! Ian Anderson and Tull seem both amazed and perplexed by the modern computer age, relating how it has solved many problems but created others. Ultimately, J-Tull Dot Com is Jethro Tull's musical takes and sagely wisdom about this adventurous era we live in, as well as their statement that they are indeed still alive and well in today's musical climate. The skateboard and backward ballcap

generation likely won't get this album with its detail and artistry – hell, the lead singer guy plays a friggin' FLUTE! But for Tull connoisseurs who grew up with this group, [J-Tull Dot Com](#) is a welcome and triumphant return from these "original masters." BUY OR DIE! RATING 9.3/10.0

FELONY IN PROGRESS – FIRST OFFENSE (MAP Productions) Our [Cut 'Burgh](#) correspondent Mark "Da Boy" Wesesky has been threatening this for months – the first offense of his 'Burgh band project, *Felony In Progress*, called [First Offense](#). Is [First Offense](#) an offense capable of scoring points on the [Final Cut](#) tenscale, or is it just plain offensive? Da Boy and his bandmates can continue to show their faces in public without shame – this disc kicks ass! *Felony In Progress* – Da Boy on drums, Joel Helfand on bass and Monte Erwin on guitar (all three sing) – fire off raw, bare-bones, bluesy rock and roll, warts and all. This album takes immediate charge out the opening gate with the leadoff meat-and-potatoes rocker "Rock and Roll In Your Face," highlighted by Monte's fuzz-guitar carnage, thunderous rhythms from Da Boy and Joel, and Joel's ballsy growl. And the album never lets up – "City Of The Blind" is a darkish ode to our troubled youth and troubled times, again convincingly voiced by Joel's stern vocals. Several songs from Da Boy's Mark Allen Project find new life here – the first of these is "Moth To A Flame," with Da Boy doing a capable job on vox – testimony to what a decent vocal arrangement and increased production budget can do! Monte flexes his vocal cords and tips his hat to the Grateful Dead on the folksy "Curley Red," before Joel croons an excellent ballad, the bluesy and Robin Trower-like "Timeless." There's the angry "Cold Bronzed Heart," and another Mark Allen Project remake, "Evil Thoughts." We hear another Monte composition, "The Music Is Alive," a harder-rocking affair that puts the wah-pedal to good use. Another Mark Allen Project remake, the Stones-flavored satirical take on our confused society "Lost;" before the album closes on a stern note with "I Won't Be Afraid." *Felony In Progress*' [First Offense](#) succeeds for a number of reasons – strong tunewriting, muscular performances, and meaty production by Da Boy himself that brings the band's fullness forward, but leaves just enough of a jagged edge to give the overall sound rawness and bite. This album rumbles at you like an unleashed battalion of angry Harleys, and rarely lets up. I can't throw the book at them – *Felony In Progress* delivers beefy, brawny American rock and roll, and [First Offense](#) does hard time! I recommend you subsidize this band's criminal activities and nab a copy of [First Offense](#) when you get the chance! I'm looking forward to this trio's second offense! (Can be obtained at the group's shows, or call the band's hotline at (412) 486-9049.)

RATING 8.9/10.0

THE BEVERIDGE BROS. BAND – REDNECK GHETTO BLUES BOOTLEG (self-produced) From the mountains of Clearfield and Centre Counties, The Beveridge Brothers Band has been jamming blues and blues rock for over 20 years. Their new CD, [Redneck Ghetto Blues Bootleg](#), is a loose, fun set demonstrating this group's brand of growling blues and blues rock. Singer/bassist Hal Beveridge, guitarists Kyle Pickett and Butch Salada, and drummer Mark Panek give us an upbeat set of blues rocking originals, and their unique takes on several classic rock favorites as well. On the opening track "Garbage Totin' Woman," we are introduced to Hal's gravelly growl and the band's flavorful playing. The Beveridge Brothers pick up the tempo a bit on "Leave Me Alone," before decelerating slow and bluesy on "I Got The Blues." There's a take on Rufus Thomas' "Walkin' the Dog," before Kyle's songwriting and singing talents are given the spotlight on two original tunes, "Pickers Lament" and "Old Red

Dog." Hal takes back the microphone for a song based on his road experience, "Girl from NY City," before he growls out a spunky rendition of "Mustang Sally." After "Swingin' Doors," Hal does a nice job growling out J.J. Cale's "Call Me The Breeze," and Kyle belts out Grand Funk's "Some Kind Of Wonderful. The Beveridge Brothers close the disc by letting drummer Mark Panek take the spotlight on the imaginatively-titled "Panek Solo." Recorded at Ark Studios in Tyrone, the disc sounds good and gritty, topped with a slight touch of reverb on the vocals. All veterans of area stages, these guys can definitely play their instruments. Their original tunes hit the mark, and the group nicely embosses the Beveridge Brothers signature onto the cover material they tackle here. The whole vibe of the album is upbeat and laid-back, never taking things too seriously, and just kicking back and having fun jamming. Roadhouse rock and blues sure to get you grooving between the headphones or speakers - Redneck Ghetto Blues Bootleg is a fun disc well worth checking out (can be purchased at the group's shows).

RATING 8.6/10.0

THE BIG'UNS – 1 ½ SIZE (self-produced) If you are under 21 and follow local rock, you know who The Big'Uns are...This young Altoona foursome has rapidly built a sizable following on the all-ages circuit with their feisty mix of ska, funk and punk. Their debut mini-album, 1½ Size, nicely captures what The Big'Uns are all about. Singer/trombone/turntable man Stevie E., singer/guitarist/saxman Nate Dogg, bassist Bobo and drummer HG Skool give us agitated, unpredictable tunes that shift gears constantly between the varying styles, making for a musical thrillride that never lets up from the get-go. There's the high-powered opener "Pa Chaw," which starts with a light ska intro before powering up into a fast, punkish rocker, and then decelerating into a funky, brassy finish. "Break Under Pressure," about dealing with the hassles of day-to-day life, starts fast and fiery before decelerating into its reggae-like chorus. There's "Para Dias Nuevos," fast-paced ska with a rapping midsection; the heavy rap-metal-leaning "Low Down," and my personal favorite, "Burn the Mic," which builds up to a slamming chorus. The group also gives us a punkish high-energy untitled bonus track with a slight nod to "Happy Trails." The Big'Uns are high-energy and raw, mixing it up between acidic guitar riffage and brass harmonies, trade-off singing and rapping passages, ever-changing chords and tempos and more. Though unpredictable, these songs do have structure and direction to them, and you can hear the Big'Uns forging a style and niche of their own. 1½ Size is a little rough around the edges, and sometimes the vocals aren't quite intelligible, but the Big'Uns lay the groundwork here, and I see them going somewhere with this. It will be interesting to hear their progress on future outings, but for now, 1½ Size is a promising start, and the Big'Uns are definitely worth keeping an eye on. (Can be obtained at the group's shows, or by e-mailing the group at thebiguns@hotmail.com – Also visit their website at <http://www.angelfire.com/pa/thebiguns>)

RATING 7.8/10.0

NEVERMORE – ON YOUR KNEES (self-produced)

RATING

8.3/10.0

NEVERMORE – TROUBLED WATERS (self-produced)

RATING

8.8/10.0

The continually amazing thing for me about covering the local music beat is how, seemingly out of nowhere, a new band can surface and totally blow my socks

off...Enter young Altoona foursome Nevermore with not one, but TWO impressive albums issued just months apart – their debut disc On Your Knees, and the follow-up, Troubled Waters. Both discs are heavy-hitting, fiery calling cards that left me awestruck on first listen! Tentative, shy and soft-spoken this band is not! On the former disc, singer Adam Marino, guitarist Mike Ritchey, bassist Kris Civils and drummer Jarred Campbell crank out six hard-rocking and sassy assaults (not including the disc-opening phone complaint track "Ms. Nassiff" or the bonus track reversal version of "Devil's Night"), highlighted by Mike's wild and histrionic guitarwork and Jarred's aggressive beats. There's the slamming but catchy opener "Sea Lullaby," the reflective "Ten Years Ago Tonight...", the crunchy "Dead Locked," "You Wanna Be" and its underscoring double-kick rumble, the alterna-flavored "The Game" and "Devil's Night." The follow-up, Troubled Waters, finds the band a bit more adventurous in the studio, utilizing a few more effects along the way. The tunewriting shows growth, and is more mature and lethal as well, highlighted by the awesome power ballad "Still," and also highlighted by the catchy midtempo cruncher "After All," an encore update of "Sea Lullaby," "Velvet" with its step-on-the-gas accelerated close, the midtempo title tune "Troubled Waters," "Stable," the slower "A Better Way," and "It's Not Always A Fairy Tale." Several things impress me about both of these discs – first, the tunewriting is strong, and you remember most of these tunes after you hear them. Secondly, the individual talents here; Adam Marino's high-flying vox and sassy presentation, Kris Civils' busy and detailed bass work; Jared Campbell's agitated, slamming drumbeats; and the detailed, clever and calculated guitar fills and effects supplied by Adam and lead guitarist Mike Ritchey. The production on both albums enables Nevermore to sound full and powerful, yet raw and unpolished. Judging by the brief period of time between these two releases, this group is prolific and capable of numerous quality tunes in a short burst of time; so I imagine we'll be hearing a lot more from this aspiring group. To date, Nevermore hasn't done much publicized live playing on area stages yet; but based on these two releases, I'll be anxious to see what their live show is about. In the meantime, if you see these discs on sale locally, dish out some green and check out what this promising young local force is about! (For more information on the group, call (814) 942-5061 or 943-6601; or e-mail the group at sealullaby@netscape.net .)

NEVERMORE – DREAMING NEON BLACK (Century Media) What's this? ANOTHER NEVERMORE? Actually, methinks the Altoonian Nevermore reviewed above may need to contemplate a name change (as should about 5 other Nevermore's I've encountered over the years; it's a popular name), 'cuz this Nevermore is national and likely had legal dibs on the name first. From Seattle, this Nevermore is the present musical home of former Sanctuary frontman Warrel Dane; and his unmistakable anguished high-range vocals are among the highlights of this album. Surrounding Warrel are the talents of former Forbidden guitarist Tim Calvert, guitarist Jeff Loomis, bassist Jim Sheppard and drummer Van Williams. This is darkish, traditional-styled heavy metal not too far removed from Dane's previous work in Sanctuary, and it is powerful stuff! More often than not, the songs are lengthier compositions with frequent tempo and chord changes, funereal vocal harmonies, unique song plot twists, detailed musicianship and raw power. There are numerous highlights throughout the CD - fans of firepower will relish such scorching assaults as the opening salvo "Ophidian/Beyond Within;" "the Death of Passion;" "I Am The Dog;" "The Fault of the Flesh" and "Poison Godmachine;" each frequently showcasing over-the-top drumming and caustic lead guitar displays. Nevermore shows us a slower, darker and more cerebral side on tunes like the title song "Dreaming Neon Black," "All Play Dead," "Cenotaph," "No More Will" and "Forever;" with Warrel's vocals rivaling the doomesque tones of early Geoff Tate or Peter

Steele. Nevermore's ever-changing metallic soundscape keeps this album from ever becoming monotonous, and there are enough memorable passages to keep us hooked and interested through the disc's duration. While Nevermore recalls their classic metal roots on Dreaming Neon Black, they nonetheless carve a unique, dark and shadowy path of their own. Fans of old and new school metal should find plenty to cheer about here; Nevermore's latest should win this band more attention yet, and offer further evidence that metal is far from dead and gone.

RATING 9.1/10.0

TURMOIL - THE PRESENCE OF... (Century Media)

AAA000UUURRRGGGHHHHH!!!!!! If you're looking for delicacy, sensitivity, instrumental detail, tenderness or intricacy, you're reading the WRONG DAMN REVIEW!!! If, on the other hand, you are seeking the heaviest, most extreme, loud, angry, ferocious metallic emotional bloodletting around, Turmoil's latest, The Process Of, is a bonafide contendah! Fitting that this band hails from Philadelphia, because vocalist Jon Gula, guitarists Jonathan Hodges and James Winters, bassist Wayne Miller and drummer Jon Pushnik drill metalcore more ferocious than Philly football fans! Turmoil plays it to the maximum all the way through this disc's dozen tracks, with full-frontal beats, guitar maelstrom, and Jon's over-the-top apocalyptic bellowing. If this band played it any more intense, their veins would likely explode out the sides of their craniums! Yet amidst all this unbridled maelstrom, discernable tunes do surface here, and this is actually listenable beyond the moshpit! Tunes like "The Discipline of Self Loathing," "The Locust," "Killing Today for a Better Tomorrow," "Fear of Falling Down," "Every Man My Enemy," "Staring Back" and "Throwing Stones" are all distinguishable blasts of metalcore carnage that would sound comfortable alongside either Agnostic Front or Slayer; my personal favorite here has to be the slow and bludgeoning crusher "Impending Doom Theory." Happiness and optimism about the new millennium are NOT prevalent lyrical themes here; Turmoil is a tad pissed off about our world, wars, societal violence and being betrayed by the system; and they have no qualms about pouring it all out and in front of us here. If you're hating life and need to vent some steam, this album cranked full blast through your favorite stereo system should provide the ,satisfactory soundtrack, and should probably instigate a few heart attacks ,for your elderly next-door neighbors as well. Turmoil's latest is pure TURMOIL, 'nuff said!

RATING 8.4/10.0

59 TIMES THE PAIN – END OF THE MILLENIUM (Burning Heart/Epitaph) I'm not sure that I'm quite down with Euro-punk yet. I wasn't all that impressed with Holland's I Against I and their derivative brand of punk rock. Now, from Sweden, we have 59 Times The Pain, and their American debut, End of the Millenium. A four-piece, 59 Times the Pain delivers agitated punk over a baker's dozen tracks spanning less than 30 minutes. Singer/guitarist Magnus, guitarist Nicke, bassist Michael and drummer Toni drill textbook hardcore punk in the vein of Rancid, Pennywise and Sick of It All. But unlike I Against I, 59 Times the Pain's agitation sounds believable, and their lyrics actually say something worthwhile. Several songs deal with pride in oneself and controlling one's own path in life – such as "Priority #1," "Need No Alibi," "Got It All In Sight" and "Daily Mind Distortion." The opening blast "Working Man Hero" is about finally appreciating the work ethic after dissing on it as youths. And "Weekend Revolution," "Make It Go Away" and "Clear Enough?" rail against racism and fascism and those who promote it. As I listen to this, I can't help but keep asking myself "What's there to get pissed off about in Sweden?" But ,ultimately, as punk goes, 59 Times the Pain sounds legitimate here, and End of the Millenium is a

solid album; if punk is your thing, this one is worth looking into.

RATING 8.0/10.0

JOHN BAKER - VAVA DEMO (VaVa) John Baker is a local institution. This Clearfield-based singer/guitarist/songwriter has been playing the area music scene longer than I have been writing about it, performing in a variety of projects over the years, such as Axis, Poverty Boy, Tugger, Soul Kitchen, Grinning Lizards, and nowadays, the Smokin' J's. All along, John has been a solo performer as well, and currently performs every Sunday night at Electric Avenue in Houtzdale. Recently, John released his first solo effort, VaVa Demo, an album of acoustic original tunes and a few choice remakes. John handles the instrumentation here, and sings lead vocals on six of the album's seven tracks. On the one song where he doesn't sing lead – a remake of the Indigo Girls' "Closer to Fine" – special guest Sherry Lender sings beautiful lead voice, and she and John's harmonies and emotional delivery turn this into one of the album's obvious highlights. The remaining six songs are very good as well - the opener "Turn," the ballad "Call Her Night," and the local-flavored "River Road" (based on an actual road in Clearfield), which has gotten John some local radio airplay. There's also "Makes Me Wonder" and "Don't Go," with Sherry helping out on backing vocals, and John's nicely-done interpretation of Green Day's "Good Riddance." This whole album is nicely done - John's voice and guitarwork are clear and concise, and with most of the album caught on one take, the energy of the moment is nicely captured here as well. If you've seen John Baker perform over the years, either solo or in group settings, you know this man has talent, and that talent is shown in abundant quantity here on VaVa Demo. If you like acoustic sounds or just want a good mellow-out disc to relax to, VaVa Demo is an excellent choice. (Can be obtained at John's shows, including Sundays at Electric Avenue in Houtzdale; or write VaVa Productions, 823 East Presqueisle Street, Philipsburg, PA 16866.)

RATING 9.3/10.0

HORSEHEAD – BIRTH TO THE OWL (self-produced) I can hear Bloomsburg's Horsehead working here on their debut CD, Birth To The Owl. They conjure up a brash, agitated heavy modern rock sound, with swarming guitars, aggressive drumbeats, distorted C.O.C./Filter-like megaphone vocals and an angst-ridden vision. But even though I like the musicianship and the riffage offered up on tracks like "Mad Cow," "3 Ft. Deep," "Baumeister," "Platonic" and "Emanation;" Horsehead is ultimately undone by an unbalanced sound mix. Produced on a 4-track, the distorted vocals are badly undermixed, and I can't understand much of what these guys are singing or saying. Horsehead seems to have a direction and a focus, but needs better mixing skills than this if they want to take this to the next level. At least for the moment, this owl is headed for extinction. Hopefully Horsehead will get this cleared up next time they enter the studio. Don't look this gift horse in the mouth...

RATING 4.7/10.0

DA BOY FROM DA BURGH

By Mark Da Boy

Where did the summer go? It's been a while since I've written for the Final Cut. First, special thanks to The Prof for playing Felony In Progress on "The Backyard Rocker."

So far, we've sold almost 50 copies. Hey, I'm happy...considering we made 50 to begin with. I have another 25 copies waiting for labels. Da Girl and I went to Toronto at the end of June for vacation. We saw KISS frontman Paul Stanley as The Phantom of the Opera. Incredible! I'm not one for Broadway musicals, but it was spectacular. It also helped that we sat up front in the first row stage right at the end of the aisle! We also saw Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers at Starlake Amphitheater that week. I'm not a big Petty fan, but I enjoyed the show. I got done with another Regatta Thunder August 7th. For the past three years, I've put the music together for it. This year's show was televised for the first time. WPGH Fox 53 did a three minute package on the making of the soundtrack that was part of their two hour live broadcast. Fame hasn't spoiled me yet. 3-W-S has taken away my Roland DM-80 Digital Workstation! After 3 years at Froggy and 3 years in Pittsburgh with this machine, I finally had to say goodbye to my working partner. I now am a Pro Tools man! It'll take some time to adjust. Oh, and 3-W-S is sending me down to Disney in Florida in September to play drums during the live morning show broadcasts. Hey, it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it. Da Girl has been for the most part healthy as of late. No weird diseases at the time of this report! Enough rambling, on with the show...

DETROIT ROCK CITY SOUNDTRACK - VARIOUS ARTISTS (MERCURY)

Since most of you know that I am a huge KISS fan, believe it or not, I have not plinked down the bucks to see this movie about four teenage boys in '78 who go to see KISS. However, I did buy the soundtrack. It's a hodge podge of 70's classic rock interspersed with 90's angst bands doing 70's covers. The disc kicks off with the "hit" off the movie - Everclear's take on Thin Lizzy's "The Boys Are Back In Town." The beat is more straightforward than the original and gets an "A" for effort. Then there's Pantera's note-for-note rendition of Sweaty Teddy's "Cat Scratch Fever." Smart and effective. But gloomsayers Marilyn Manson win the total desecration award of the year for bastardizing AC/DC's "Highway to Hell." Bon Scott would roll over in his vomit if he heard this! Drain STH does T-Rex's "20th Century Boy." Pass. An all female group The Donnas does an ok version of KISS's "Strutter." And KISS comes in at the end with a very 80's sounding power ballad "Nothing Can Keep Me From You." Sung by Paul, he unfortunately sounds like the only member of KISS on the track! The rest of the disc is filled with great 70's rock from Van Halen, Cheap Trick, Black Sabbath, Bowie, The Runaways, Sweet and two KISS Classics. Judging by the dismal box office sales, I may just wait for the DVD of the movie to come out. And I was disappointed that my painted heroes succumbed to lip-syncing on WCW Nitro! Better times have GOT to be ahead. Sadly, I can only recommend this disc to the diehards. If you wanted the best, it's not here.

RATING

7.9/10.0

GRAND FUNK RAILROAD - THIRTY YEARS OF FUNK 1969-1999 (CAPITOL)

When I was growing up in the early to mid 70's, there were three bands that I really liked. Bachman Turner Overdrive, Three Dog Night and GRAND FUNK RAILROAD! And now this amazing three disc set only solidifies my feelings for this three (and sometimes four) piece band from Flint, Michigan. No doubt VH-1's "Behind the Music" series on the group spurned this release. It doesn't matter. All the hits are here, plus unreleased gems and three powerful new songs. Some of the highlights include two unreleased tracks from the "American Band" studio sessions: "Hooray" and "The End." Both kick major ass! Funky and heavy. One of the new tracks has a killer fast

intro - "Pay Attention To Me." They also threw in "Destitute and Losin," until now released only as the B side to the Loco Motion 45. Drummer Don Brewer, in my mind, IS rock and roll drumming personified! He and guitarist Mark Farner vocally compliment each other so well...sort of hard rock's answer to the Everly Brothers. The gate fold-out package is a nice touch and the 52 page booklet is full of Grand photos and information. If there is a complaint about this collection, it would be that it's one CD too short. They skimmed over the 80's incarnation of the band, with only "Queen Bee" and the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place." But this is petty, compared to what is contained within. So get the funk to the store and snatch up this collection today! Buy or die!!!

9.8/10.0

RATING

CHEAP TRICK – MUSIC FOR HANGOVERS (NEVER) Thank God for straight-ahead rock groups like Cheap Trick! It's hard to believe that their last full live release was their phenomenal Live at Budokan LP over 20 years ago! Now, their second live recording – not taken from Japan, but from four incredible nights last year at the Metro in Chicago. Every night they performed a whole album...their first four...a different LP each night! Very cool. It's not a surprise that the majority of the fourteen tracks are pulled from their earliest recordings...with a few obvious selections. No, you won't find their 80's sellout hit "The Flame," but you will find "I Want You to Want Me," "Surrender," and "Dream Police." Also of note, Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins fame, plays guitar on "Mandocello" and writes a glowing story in the inner sleeve. You say, "C'mon Mark! How does it sound?" It flat out ROCKS! Lead singer Robin Zander is still as powerful today as he was before! Guitarist Rick Neilson still is one of rock's underrated axemen. Laid back one minute, screaming the next! I saw them live at college back in '83 when they were supporting their Next Position Please album, and I had a blast! When they hit the 'Burgh again, I'll be there one way or another! As far as the title goes, I don't know about hangovers, but this disc is intoxicating! Buy or die!

RATING 9.4/10.0

THE OFFSPRING – AMERICANA (COLUMBIA) The way pop fluff and hardcore rap has taken over MTV and Top 40 Radio, you've got to plug alterna-punk bands like The Offspring to spit in the face of Britny Spears and Nas! Speed riffs and beats and scream-in-your-face vocals that rarely slow down. Of course, "Pretty Fly (for a White Guy)" and "Why Don't You Get A Job" are obvious stand outs. And as far as social commentary, these guys know just how messed up today's relations are in the ode to headgames song "She's Got Issues" and their send-up of the old ballad "Feelings." You'll laugh, you'll cry...but you won't regret buying this little piece of Americana.

RATING 8.8/10.0

DEEP PURPLE – MACHINE HEAD (ANNIVERSARY 2-CD EDITION) (RHINO) If I had to pick an album that really put heavy metal on the map, I'm picking this one from 1972! A killer from start to finish. And just like other re-releases, they add more than spitshine to it! Two discs! The first CD is the original LP with the B-side track "When a Blind Man Cries," and quadrophonic mixes of "Maybe I'm a Leo" and "Lazy" (my favorite track)...all beautifully remastered! Then on the second CD we are treated to original Purple bassist Roger Glover's remix from the original 16-track recordings...leaving studio banter at the beginning and end and NO fade outs. You hear whole songs! (I always wish more re-releases would do this!) Plus, Roger treats us to "Smoke On The Water" with a previously unissued guitar solo from guitar hero Ritchie Blackmore. This reissue also contains a 28-page booklet including a picture of the actual building on fire that inspired their famous song. I won't get into detail as

to each track. Why? By now, everyone knows 'em. Each song a classic! But even if you have the single CD, plink down the bucks for this one! Another buy or die!

RATING 9.8/10.0

LIVE CONCERT REVIEWS

FOREIGNER/JOURNEY – STAR LAKE AMPHITHEATER 6/8/99

First off, a very big thanks to Sparky the Engineer for giving Da Girl and me tickets to the show! Da Girl really wanted to see this show...mostly Journey. She and I were not disappointed for the most part. For two huge rock groups whose hits have long past, you wouldn't know it by the turnout. I'm never good at estimating crowds, but I'll say at least 15,000 braved the summer night humidity to hear all those songs you know and love.

Now the bad news. Lou Gramm, lead singer of Foreigner, needs to find new employment! There's nothing like waiting for that big note, knowing full well that it's gonna get botched! By the time the encore "Hot Blooded" came on, I knew that we were in for a bumpy ride. At least there's still Journey.

Wow! Yes, Steve Perry is no longer with the group, but you wouldn't know it. Original guys – guitarist Neal Schon, bassist Ross Valory and keyboardist Jonathan Cain hired themselves a young Steve Perry! Smart move! This guy looks, moves, and most important, sings like the real deal! The only song that I wanted to hear live was "Stone In Love" to which they played second after opening with "Separate Ways." I had to sound negative, but why do some bands who are past their prime not stick with the hits? One or two obscure cuts are okay, but not for a third of the show! That gripe aside, the show was excellent! Neal Schon is still at the top of his game. That goes the same for Jonathan Cain. By the time "Faithfully" came as the encore, I knew that the majority of the people who came would walk away happy. That goes for me, too.

ROD STEWART – STAR LAKE AMPHITHEATER 6/15/99

...And then one week after a classic rock double shot, it was back at Star Lake for Rod Stewart. I came to the show with low expectations, but walked away very impressed. Unlike Journey, Rod knew that people came to hear the hits! And that's ALL he played! There's nothing better than seeing a star and knowing every song. Even if you don't necessarily like every song ("People Get Ready," "Have I Told You Lately," "Rhythm of My Heart")...Rod's voice was in form and he seemed like he loved to perform just the hits. You name it, he played it...("Hot Legs," "Infatuation," "Stay With Me," "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy," "Havin' a Party"). He's also in shape for being an old fart. Rod ran around, kicking soccer balls left and right. Overall, a good show.

RUMBLINGS AND RAMBLINGS FROM D'DRUMMER AND DA PEBBLE

Greetings again, one and all!

On the musical front, Ebensburg-based Stix and Stones seems to be on the verge of imploding. Bassist Red and vocalist Morgan have both departed the group, leaving only guitarist Rick Ramsey and drummer Jamie Kmett. Rick and Jamie have been playing the band's gigs, with soundman Angelo Pompa playing bass. A drummer by trade, Angelo is quickly learning his way around the fretboard. No word as of yet on the future of S-N-S, but other bands are pursuing the remaining members to join other bands. We shall just have to wait and see. For the time being, you can still catch Stix and Stones every other Wednesday at Peter C's in Altoona.

Now, to the real crux of this article. For those of you who hate me, open the bottle of bubbly! Those of you who like my articles, bust out the Kleenex. This will be, along with Da Pebble, my last article for the time being. As you know by now, Da Pebble and I got married Sept. 25, 1999, and things are way too hectic right now for either of us to write for The Final Cut. We shall return after things have settled down, but for now, we must take some time off. Many thanks to D'Scribe for allowing us the honor of writing for the Cut, and thanks to fellow Cut staffers Da Boy and Da Girl, Schtiv (Androtard!), Da (False) Beer God, Al Slavicsky, and all the folks who read this mag. Thanks for all your support, and we shall return with a vengeance! Take care, and peace.

Regards,

D'Drummer and Da Pebble

A FINAL NOTE TO AL: QUOTING LINER NOTES FROM TOOL CD'S AND PLAGIARIZING OBSCURE MAYNARD KEENAN RANTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE RUNNING SMACK. LISTEN TO JIM ROME ON THE RADIO (IF YOU HAVE ONE) AND LEARN HOW TO RUN SMACK...OR JUST LET SCHTIV BUST THE LIVING HELL OUT OF YOU IN THE CUT PAGES MONTH AFTER MONTH. YOU'LL GET THE POINT SOMEHOW.

A VIEW FROM THE DOOR

By Schtiv the Friendly Sebastiano's Doorman

Sup!?

Seeing it's now Autumn and this is the Summer issue, I should have volumes to write. Well, I'm going to spare all of you that story and condense everything into a rant and rave that won't make you go to sleep.

Upon seeing the list of the 100 most famous people of the last 1,000 years, I was surprised to see that Neil Armstrong didn't make the cut. Neither did Mother Theresa. Lady Di did. What is up with this?

Thus my quest to see just how stupid people are for the second time.

A couple years ago I stood at the DOOR and while checking ID's and collecting money, asked about 200 people how many states there were. Only 2 people answered right. To call this percentage pathetic would be a compliment.

REESE'S PIECES PART 2: Still hot on the path of stupidity and pissed off about Neil Armstrong not making the top 100, Thanksgiving Weekend at Sabs I shall throw this question to the masses – Who was the first man to set foot on the moon?

The results will be printed next issue. I can't wait to see this.

I guess since I only attended 4 concerts over the Summer and JP's already covering three of them in his spiel, I'll touch on those ones briefly...

OZZFEST '99 – STAR LAKE. Comments...IT RULED!

TOM PETTY – HERSHEY PARK STADIUM. Comments...If you ever have a chance to catch Tom Petty in concert, "GO AND SEE HIM!" Tom Petty delivers 2½ hours-plus of every song you would want him to perform live. The Professor will probably have the song list covered in his column in detail. All of the songs were excellent, but Tom Petty doing an acoustical version of "Even Walls Fall Down" from the She's The One soundtrack was the tune that was the show for me. Just the sincerity that was evident when he played that song gave me goosebumps.

I regret that it took me until 1999 to finally see Tom Petty live. I missed a lot of good shows. Luckily I didn't miss this one.

By the way, a hearty "HEIL" to the GESTAPO patrolling the lot that day.

Security to protect people is one thing. THAT'S GOOD.

Security to force people not to tailgate or drink (COLA, BEER, WHATEVER) or eat (BURGERS, DOGS, etc.) without the venue not making profit...IS BAD.

BLACK SABBATH – HERSHEY PARK STADIUM. Comments...Besides some SCHILL not being able to handle his concert preparation (IDIOT), it was a trip. Since we showed up in a bus, they couldn't harass us in the parking lot. That didn't mean they couldn't hassle me on the way into the show in the beer line. I got searched like I was trying to get backstage at the MTV Music Awards or something. The ASSHOLE I had to get past made me show him rabbit ears and then proceeded to search my pack of cigarettes.

Then, since I got in but J.P. got busted with his camera, I waited for him to come back. That's when another security person told me that I couldn't stand closer to the fence separating the venue from the lot than some BULLS#%T designated line. I guess by standing back from the fence, it would make it more difficult for people on the other side to throw over cameras, VCR cams, children, illegal aliens, machine guns, dope, whatever.

After all this, I finally run into J.P. (who DID get the camera in finally, by the way), and it's off to the beer line. After standing in line for about 10 minutes, I suddenly remembered that since I wasn't driving, I didn't bring my license. STUPID STEVE.

Upon making it to the front of the line 20 minutes later, the lady pouring beer asked for ID when I requested a Bud Lite. No ID. NO BEER. THAT'S ALL.

Anyway, Black Sabbath took the stage and put on a concert I'll remember for a long time. All the songs I used to listen to growing up were performed better than I expected. (EVEN BETTER THAN OZZFEST) Kids, I gotta say this, OZZY RULES. SABBATH RULES. 'NUFF SAID.

Next issue my savage review of the Alanis Morissette/Tori Amos concert gets printed. LOOK OUT!

"THE ONLY CHICK THAT DOESN'T LIKE ALANIS MORISSETTE IS REALLY A MAN!" – (some idiot at Pelly's 8/99). Every time I think about somebody saying that I have to laugh.

Since we're covering around a 6-month time span between issues, I came up this little ditty called THEN AND NOW. Just a couple takes of how I felt a couple or few months ago compared to what I think now...

THEN...At a little after 3 PM on June 24, it was announced that Mario Lemieux acquired ownership of the Pittsburgh Penguins. I was ECSTATIC! Not only does the team stay in Pittsburgh, but it's a good team.

NOW...The Penguins SUCK.

THEN...JEFF GORDON. JEFF GORDON. JEFF GORDON!!!

NOW...Ray Evernham got out of his contract early to be the man behind a new manufacturer. Then your pit crew bails on you to go to a REAL winning team (ROBERT YATES RACING)...WAAAAAGGGHHH!!! Hey LUGNUT, KID ROCK'S motto to ya.

THEN...The Packers were a team guaranteed to make the playoffs.

NOW...GREEN BAY SUCKS!

THEN...WOW! Penn State might be a contender for the National Championship.

NOW...They are on the verge of losing 3 in a row. THEYYYYYY SUCK.

THEN...Barry Sanders retires! Detroit is doomed.

NOW...The Lions sit alone in first place in their division.

THEN...BEER GOD and BIG JIM thought they owned Donnie (the Pelly's cook) Crum and Sctiv at the Stanley Cup Finals of pool.

NOW...NOT!

THEN...Americans were looking forward to electing a new President.

NOW...Upon seeing the candidates, they wish they didn't have to.

THEN...It was June.

NOW...It is November.

Before I end this opus, I have to address this millennium thing...

To start things off, no one knows the exact day and year of Jesus' birth or death. That should settle it right there. And if you ever start to think about this in the GRAND SCHEME, 2,000 years doesn't even qualify as a NANOSECOND. 2000. It means nothing. The Sun is going to come up over the horizon the way it does every approximately 24 hours, just the same as it has for the past 4 billion years.

HAPPY DIFFERENT DAY!

In memory of Ken Feltenberger, who died in a motorcycle accident last month...Ken, I hope as I write this that you are somewhere riding in the wind.

LEARN TO SWIM.

WISDOM FROM THE BEER GOD

By The Final Cut Beer God, Mike Fornari

I...AM...THE BEER GOD!!!

Beer God ponder question of why he attract older women lately? First Florida, then Pellegrine's. Beer God conclude older women recognize maturity level and sagely wisdom of Beer God. This good. Beer God remember when he attract younger women...THOSE WERE DAYS!

Beer God constantly asked by minion - "What is REAL beer drinker?" REAL beer drinker drink REAL beer, not watered down light beer piss water. BEER GOD SAY: "Beer drinker who drink false beer is like singer who sing to karaoke!" REAL beer drinker dedicated to craft of drinking beer...REAL beer drinker not let good beer go to waste; REAL beer drinker suck foam out of beer rag at Pellegrine's on Sunday night! THAT is REAL beer drinker!

THE BEER GOD...has spoken...**GO NOW!**

SLAVICKY'S SMORGASBORD

By Al Slavicky

THE STEW OF REVIEWS

(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – HONEST DON'S GREATEST SH*TS (Honest Don's Crazy Crappin' Clowns, P.O. Box 192027, San Francisco, CA 94119-2027)

Ever need too great a fix of new punk/punk-ska, then pick up a copy of this release for these bands. You will never see music in the same way. You got the pop punk of Diesel Boy, Teen Idols, Limp, Fluf (one of my new favorite bands), and Chixdiggit; '77 punk sound by Hagfish, I Church and Riverdales (who are like the Ramones); ska-infested punk by Mad Caddies and the Dance Hall Crashers; and East Coast punk by Pittsburgh's Anti Flag. More crap than the average person can handle. If you want to see some of the future buzz bands, secure a copy of this release as soon as possible. RATING 8.9/10.0

(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – THE OZZFEST '98 (Best Buy) This was the 2-CD collectors' set which was given to people who attended OzzFest '98 who sent in a voucher and five dollars. This is a great compilation CD with 31 bands and tunes. Contains bands which were on the North America OzzFest '98 tour. Ozzy Osbourne, Coal Chamber, Limp Bizkit, Sevendust, Monster Voodoo Machine, Kilgore, Megadeth, Motorhead, Incubus and Life of Agony...Plus other bands who were touring on other tours in 1998 – Slayer, Fear Factory, Cold, Vision of Disorder, Rob Zombie, Monster Magnet, Deftones, Rammstein, Rorschach Test, Gravity Kills, Vast, Jackyl, Clutch, Kid Rock, Sprung Monkey, Urge, Flight 16, Spineshank, and Our Lady Peace. Overall, a great introduction to what is happening in the metal/hard rock world. RATING 8.1/10.0

(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – SURVIVAL OF THE FATTEST: FAT MUSIC VOLUME

TWO (Fat Wreck Chords) What can one say about a compilation which opens with a cover of the Mamas and Papas' "California Dreamin,'" which starts with a garage punk style similar to the legendary Munsters' idols The Standells, only to be transformed into a punk gem...Hi Standard does a marvel. Also includes tracks by No Use For A Name, Snuff, Propaganda, Lagwagon, Diesel Boy, Good Riddance, Tilt, Strung Out, NOFX, Frenzel Bomb, Bracket and Me First and the Gimme Gimmes. Reads like a who's who of modern-day punk. Give Fat Wreck Chords credit for compiling this release. RATING 8.7/10.0

(VARIOUS ARTISTS) – PHYSICAL FATNESS – FAT MUSIC VOLUME THREE

(Fat Wreck Chords) The third installment of the Fat Music samplers. Contains a cool cover of Simon & Garfunkel's "Me and Julio Down By the Schoolyard" done by Me First and the Gimme Gimmes – hats up to you. Snuff's "Arsehole" is definitely a song which is about some people here in Central PA; NOFX's "Oliver Me" proves that the band can still punk out, Good Riddance's "Stand" rules due to the fact they include samples from a religious broadcast; Screeching Weasel's "Cool Kids" proves why they are a main force in punk music since 1987; plus the legendary Dickies doing "My Pop Is The Cop" continues to make the band more famous. Also includes tracks by Strung Out, Goober Patrol, Hi Standard, Lagwagon, Bracket, Swingin' Utters, No Use For A Name, Screw 32, Propagandi, Tilt and 88 Finger Louie. Essential listening. RATING 8.8/10.0

WINE OF NAILS – "IF" IS WORTH NOTHING (Negative Infinity Records, 223 A-Frame Road, Ebensburg, PA 15931)

This band has been around in many different forms since the early 1990's. This debut CD demonstrates all creative teamwork and driving force behind the band. While most people may be turned off by the complex instrumentals presented here, educated musicians and music scholars would appreciate the release's tunes. John Charney delivers some intense,

mind-boggling riffs that combine elements of electric blues (Stevie Ray Vaughan), jazz fusion (Carlos Santana/Buddy Miles), classical-oriented metal (Steve Vai) and old 1970's-style progressive rock (Tangerine Dream/King Crimson), while Dominic Peruso uses similar style drum beats along with some almost Mickey Hart or Neal Peart-styled playing. The seven tunes presented here are album-oriented rock lengthy masterpieces, especially the melodramatic changes in "Jo Brujo," which starts out with a strong blues overtone, only to evolve into an eerie, almost Mercyful Fate-like tune; the 11:37 classic "John Wayne Ethic," which demonstrates how an instrumental seems to flow into a continuous fusing mold of blues/jazz soundscapes; and the release's closing track "Touched By The Divine" would make Stevie Ray Vaughan and the Vaughan Brothers proud. In overview, Wine Of Nails still proves that instrumental rock lives in Central Pennsylvania, and this musical power is worth checking out, especially when they play out live; for you never know what new gems are waiting to be heard.

RATING 9.5/10.0

DEL NOAH AND THE MT. ARAFAT FINKS – BLOWER EXPLOSION (Skunk Records, 16572 Burke Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92647-4538) Old-fashioned surf rock is alive and well, and Del Noah and the Mt. Arafat Finks proves that. In the vein of Dick Dale, these guys do some dragster rock-surf rock-vintage soundtrack-style of music. These 17 tracks make you want to get on the road and put your car into high gear. One must admire the sound of "Chicken," devoted to the classic roadster game of the 1960's; the crazed cover of the 60's action-adventure children's live action series that appeared on The Banana Splits – "Danger Island;" the insane "Mormon Cycle Poker Run;" the guest spot of Grizzly Adams' Dan Haggerty on a track, plus all the crazy bits from old films on drag racing. Overall, this CD is a must for hot rodsters everywhere, and proves that drag rock is still in.

RATING 9.4/10.0

THE FINAL ENCORE

Concert reviews by D'Scribe

SUMMER CONCERT SEASON RECAP

I confess...during the Summer of 1999, I was an unapologetic concert whore. If there was a decent concert happening, and I had access to tickets or a ride to the show, I was there. I've seen more concerts during the past three months than in any summer prior. And here are the recaps of my concert season, warts and all...

OZZFEST '99 @ COCA COLA STAR LAKE AMPHITHEATER, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 6/12/99

For anybody with lingering doubts in their minds as to whether heavy metal music is alive or dead as we near the end of the Millennium, OzzFest once again affirmed that heavy music is very much alive and well. The faces and parameters by which this genre is measured change from year to year, but the popularity of OzzFest with its line-up of old and new school metal shows that metal with its various mutations continues to thrive.

Backtrack one year ago...Nightmarish visions of being stuck in Pittsburgh Parkway gridlock in near 90-degree weather without air conditioning danced in my head as this year's OzzFest approached. NO WAY was there going to be a repeat performance this year! So wheelman Schtiv D'Door and I formulated our road plan, which would have us divert around Pittsburgh altogether and come up to the Star Lake from the south through Washington. It added an extra hour to our journey, but we would at least get there early and not miss most of OzzFest like we did last year.

As expected, we arrived just short of the scheduled 12 noon start time for OzzFest, and procured our parking space at the outskirts of the Star Lake parking area near Route 18. As parking went, this was actually a good spot, near the exit gate of the venue, so we would not have to wait long to leave at the end of the day. But this spot was seemingly miles from the Star Lake itself. As we approached the ticket gates, we discovered that the Second Stage entertainment had already begun, and Apartment 26 was already entertaining a good-sized crowd. Actually, the OzzFest second stage was set up in the Star Lake parking lot itself, so you could actually stand outside of the fenced area in the parking lot and observe the second stage of OzzFest from the sides. As we were supposed to meet the Big Jim/Beer God entourage outside the main ticket gate, we only took a passing look at Apartment 26, doing what appeared to be electronic-edged dance metal. I didn't see nearly enough of them to be able to make a concrete judgement of them, but from what I observed, Apartment 26 sounded competent enough, and the early stagefront crowd seemed to be into them.

We soon did meet the Big Jim entourage, and determined that we would relocate our cooler from our parking outpost to Big Jim's car, which was much closer to the Star Lake entrance. As we trudged back up the seemingly endless hill back to our parking space to get our cooler, we passed the Second Stage again, and Drain S.T.H. was now performing. We only observed Drain S.T.H. at close range for a few seconds, while walking back to our car, but we could hear the majority of their set as we lumbered up the hill to the lot. We heard them do the better-known tunes from their Horror Wrestling CD, "Serve the Shame" and "I Don't Mind;" and also some tunes from their just-being-released second CD, Freaks of Nature. Like Apartment 26 before them, Drain S.T.H. seemed to have a very receptive and rocking crowd at stagefront. And from our moving vantage point, their set appeared to sound pretty good.

Eventually we did reach our car, procure our cooler, and lumber back down the hill to the main Star Lake parking lot to hang out with the Big Jim entourage. Though Big Jim had brought picnic gear along and intended to cook out, the majority of his entourage - the Beer God and his assorted minion, wanted to get inside right away and get their maximum dosage of OzzFest.

At this point, allow me to salute the official insect of this year's OzzFest, the locust. I'm talking about those red-eyed locusts who emerge every 7 or 10 years - well, this was the year of their hatch around the Star Lake environs, and these insects provided us with ample entertainment and amusement. These locusts would blindly fly into people, prompting squeamish squeals of terror from various female OzzFest attendees as the hard-shelled critters smacked into bare backs and shoulders. The locusts were harmless - they didn't bite, but they did have a hard exoskeleton exterior that could raise goosebumps on the uninitiated upon impact. In a way, these

ominous-looking creatures made the perfect insect for OzzFest, and I for one was rather intrigued with them.

So before long, we went inside Coca Cola Star Lake Amphitheater, found our initial space on the lawn seating area, and witnessed the next band on the main stage. I was thankful we went in when we did, as one of the groups I most anticipated seeing at this year's OzzFest, System Of A Down, were in the midst of their set on the main stage. Totally blown away by this group's self-titled debut CD, I was anxious to see how they delivered the material live. System Of A Down was mixing up material from the album and new songs written since. As we arrived, they were in the midst of the adrenaline-rush "P.L.U.C.K.," and also proceeded to do "Suggestions," "Suite-Pee," the slower and cerebral "Spiders," "Soil," "War," and closed the set with "Sugar" from the album. A member of Fear Factory joined the group onstage for a few songs. I was very impressed with System Of A Down's set, as frontman Serj delivered all the agitation I expected, and threw a few political asides into his tirades. The rest of the group played it tight and wild behind him, and System Of A Down's set was action-packed and exciting.

After System's set, we explored OzzFest's "Never Never Land," a mini-festival of games, souvenirs and various rock-related items and attire on sale. A member of one of the bands was autographing ticket stubs; I have no idea who he was, but I got him to sign mine, and his unintelligible scribble didn't enable me to discern who he was either – but at least I have an autographed OzzFest ticket! Locusts were still flying erratically, smacking into walls, chairs, and the occasional unprotected human shoulder or back.

Soon, the next OzzFest mainstage band was ready to go - Godsmack. Having seen Godsmack closer to home a week earlier at Crowbar, I was a little bit more familiar with what this band could deliver live. Singer Sully and the rest of Godsmack did the expected hot tunes off the group's debut CD, such as "Whatever" and "Keep Away," plus other tunes from the CD like "Moon Baby" and "Time Bomb." Sully hailed the headliners several times during the set, praising the "gods of heavy metal, Black Sabbath." Godsmack was well-received by the vast majority of the crowd, although one dissatisfied drunk near our lawnfront position was running less-than-complimentary smack at the group. Our vantage point for viewing Godsmack wasn't the best, but from what I could see and hear, I thought the group put on another impressive set.

From there, we sauntered over to the beer stand for a high-priced brew (\$5 for a pounder draft), and – collectively not being huge fans of Primus' recent stuff – stayed in that general vicinity for most of Primus' set. I admittedly wasn't paying close attention to Primus, and the only song I even recognized from their set was the opening song, "My Name Is Mud." I got the sense that much of the crowd wasn't really into Primus' quarky

funk-meets-metal, either, as cheers sounded subdued at best; and the group didn't get an especially good mix on the sound.

As Big Jim and his entourage had a pair of pavilion tickets to share, Schtiv and I swapped tickets and moved up into the pavilion area to partake in the next band on the main stage, Slayer. Having never seen Slayer before, I was anxious to see what this band was about live. As expected, Slayer did some material off their most recent

album Diabolus In Musica, including "Bitter Peace," "Death's Head" and "Stain Of Mind." They also did earlier material such as "Dead Skin." Though I have heard many stunning accounts of Slayer's live performances over the years, I was a bit disappointed in the group's OzzFest set. And I don't think it was necessarily the group's fault, for the most part. Slayer were headliners relegated to an opener's spot, and seemed limited onstage in the daylight, having to rely on the music alone without the visuals their headlining status normally might afford them. And relying on the music alone, the group was hampered by a muddy sound mix, much like Primus before them. The mix muffled much of Tom Araya's acidic bite, and took some of the vicious edge off Slayer's overall sound. Beyond that - much as Slayer would seem a perfect fit for OzzFest on paper - following some of the diverse modern metal bands who preceded them on the main stage, Slayer's old-school thrash - coupled with the lackluster sound mix - almost seemed out of place. For me, Slayer did an okay job given the circumstances, but I think to see this band at their most ferocious, I probably will have to check them out when they are headlining sometime in the future.

I hadn't paid any attention to the OzzFest second stage since going inside, as the vast majority of bands I wanted to see were all playing the main stage. But I did want to see the second stage headliners, Fear Factory. So Big Jim, the Beer God and I made our way to the second stage, where Fear Factory was under way with "Replica." And to my delight, I discovered that the OzzFest second stage was general admission...err..."survival of the fittest" seating (actually standing). Since I did manage to get a camera into the Star Lake (naughty me), I decided to brave the potential moshing hazards and test my luck working my way through the crowd towards stagefront to get a few pictures. I actually was able to work my way fairly close to the stage in front of the right side speakers - not close enough to get caught up in any moshpits, but close enough to have to watch my head for flying feet as a succession of body-surfers passed overhead during the course of Fear Factory's set. I actually wound up helping a few surfers stay airborne! In the meantime, Burton C. Bell and Fear Factory fired off a progression of their cyber-edged terse metal, interrupting the flow only once for their hit take on Gary Numan's 80's chestnut "Cars." Fear Factory's set came off well. Their cyber effects were largely de-emphasized in the live setting, and the group allowed their brash guitar edge to carry the sound. And Burton C. Bell gave a solid performance, pacing the stage and constantly acknowledging the crowd. My only disappointment was not hearing the group do "Descent" off Obsolete - they might have done it prior to our arrival.

At the close of Fear Factory's set, I quickly found Big Jim and the Beer God, and we returned to the main stage, where the Deftones were already under way. Admittedly, I'm not familiar with this group outside of a few select songs, so I can't comment on what all they played, other than "Bored," (), and a song they identified as being a Depeche Mode cover (I'm not a Depeche Mode fan either, so I don't know if the Deftones were serious or joking). So for what it was worth, the Deftones did a fairly good job on their set of tension-and-release angst-ridden modern metal, and the OzzFest crowd - now swelled to its peak size by the conclusion of events at the second stage - seemed much appreciative.

Sunset was beginning to approach as Rob Zombie took the stage. After hearing remarkable accounts of his concert at Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center earlier in the year, I was anxious to behold the spectacle of Rob Zombie myself. I wasn't disappointed. As advertised, and despite being an opening act, Rob Zombie brought

an impressive visual presentation along, complete with pyro, dancers, lasers and other theatrics. Rob mixed it up between tunes from his Hellbilly Deluxe CD and familiar tunes from his prior White Zombie stint. Obvious highlights were "Supercharger Heaven," "More Human Than Human," "Thunder Kiss '65," plus current faves like "Dragula" and "Living Dead Girl." Rob himself was an impressive presence, his vocal roar and prominent showmanship establishing him as probably the singular most memorable PERSONALITY at this OzzFest this side of Ozzy himself. Rob Zombie's set was uptempo, continually moving, and had enough interesting visuals and diversions to keep everyone riveted to the action on stage. Definitely Rob Zombie lived up to all the hype, and I for one would gladly check him out live again.

Up to this point, the OzzFest crowd had been pretty mild given the concert, and fairly well-behaved. The plastic water bottles were starting to fly around during Rob Zombie's set, but by and large, OzzFest was pretty well behaved thus far. But night was descending upon us, and Ozzy Osbourne had a knack for firing people up – after all, it was Ozzy who inspired the near-riot that got him banned from Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center a few years ago. So while I prepared to witness Ozzy and Black Sabbath, I was ever-mindful that things could explode or fire up at any moment.

Soon, what everyone had been waiting for, as Ozzy and Black Sabbath convened their "Last Supper Tour" onstage, opening with "War Pigs," during which video footage of planes and air battles was shown. This kicked off a celebration of all things Sabbath, as Ozzy, Tony Iommi, Bill Ward and Geezer Butler proceeded to crank out generous doses of early Sabbath favorites – "N.I.B.," "Fairies Wear Boots," "After Forever," and "Electric Funeral."

Ozzy then introduced "Sweet Leaf," which was when all the audience fun began...As if a symbolic lighting up of a "fattie" in conjunction with the song's pro-marijuana stance, fans all over the Star Lake lawn area began setting small bonfires, collecting discarded trash into small piles and lighting them. Soon, with many small fires and a few larger ones dotting the entire Star Lake environs, a yellow glow and a smoky haze enveloped the area. One such bonfire was lit directly behind where we were standing, as several celebrants lit cardboard beverage holders and plastic beer cups, and one inebriated celebrant did his best "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick" dance, jumping over the small bonfire creation to the amusement of the onlookers. Star Lake security was clearly not amused, as several times yellow-shirted Star Lake security staffers showed up with water bottles to extinguish the flames. But as soon as they would leave, the celebrants would resume their small infernos.

All the while, Ozzy and Black Sabbath continued to perform, occasionally drenching the stagefront fans with water hoses activated from above the stage. After several more obscure earlier numbers, the group eventually did their title song "Black Sabbath," during which movie footage of Satan appeared on the video monitors. Black Sabbath did the obligatory "Iron Man," and then "Children Of The Grave" to finish their set, ending with a spray of fireworks and confetti. Needless to say, an encore was forthcoming, and after several moments of OzzFest crowd din, Black Sabbath returned for one more song, "Paranoid," to end the set.

I have to admit that by this point, the combination of the lengthy day of loud rock, a few brewskis and fatigue combined to give me one mammoth headache, and thus my takes on Black Sabbath this night remain somewhat incomplete, clouded by head pain. But largely, I did observe that Ozzy's voice this night was in the best shape I

had EVER heard it in, with Black Sabbath or solo. Like Ozzy's solo concerts of late, Black Sabbath employed a series of video accompaniments for certain songs, adding effect and excitement to the Sabbath reunion spectacle. Black Sabbath seemed happy to be onstage and doing OzzFest – drummer Bill Ward especially, given that a year ago at this time Bill was recovering from a heart attack. And Ozzy was typical Ozzy, parading back and forth on stage, firing the crowd up and making sure everyone was enjoying this, his festival creation. The reunion that seemed an impossibility a few years ago was finally taking place, and Black Sabbath's "Last Supper" was a fitting headliner to OzzFest '99.

Despite the splitting headache at the end, I was glad I attended OzzFest this year. And needless to say, if Ozzy Osbourne convenes another such fest in the new Millennium, I am there, 'nuff said!

BAD COMPANY/GADGET WHITE BAND @ BRYCE JORDAN CENTER, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY 6/26/99

Reunions! Reunions! REUNIONS!

Simply put, Bad Company was one of the bands that got me through junior high and high school. The first self-titled Bad Company album was legendary. It was blues-driven 70's crunch rock, the stuff that puts hair on your chest. The title song "Bad Company" was my anthem all during 8th grade; I couldn't get enough ("Can't Get Enough") of that song. The second album, Straight Shooter, was also great. Surprisingly, my two favorite tunes off that album WEREN'T the obvious hits and classics of today like "Shooting Star," "Good Lovin' Gone Bad" or "Feel Like Makin' Love" (though all are excellent songs) - "Wild Fire Woman" and "Call On Me" were my favorite songs there. Run With The Pack also kicked ass, with the title song, "Live For The Music," "Honey Child," the whimsical take on "Youngblood," "Silver Blue & Gold" and more. I sort of got away from Bad Co. during Burnin' Sky, but then the group rebounded in my senior year of high school with Desolation Angels, and classics like "Rock and Roll Fantasy" and "Gone Gone Gone." Rough Diamonds sucked, and then Brian Howe came along and the second incarnation of Bad Company took the group through the late 80's and 90's. Other bands and sounds took my attention, and I quietly relegated Bad Company to the history file.

But with all the reunions that have surfaced in recent years, it was not out of the realm of possibility that the original Bad Company might get back together, and they did. The brisk sales of The Original Bad Company Anthology showed that this band was still very popular, and the concert tour was eagerly anticipated as one of THE tours of this summer.

When Bad Company's reunion tour swing through Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center was announced, I could have set my clock by the phone call I was expecting at Q94 that night, as central PA's most devout Bad Company fan, Mountain Mel, would no doubt be calling that evening to cement plans for attending the concert.

At first, it had been rumored that David Lee Roth would open Bad Company's reunion tour. But that never materialized, and we would soon learn that Billy Squier would open the show. This was cool. I was a Squier fan from back before he was a household name, back when his biggest song was "The Big Beat." It would be cool to see him do that one live.

When the night finally arrived, the Bad Company entourage had grown to four, as Mountain Mel and I teamed up with Queen of the Ruche Michelle and her friend, Todd, so we could all go in one car.

As we arrived at the door of the Bryce Jordan Center, we were disappointed to learn that Billy Squier had cancelled out of the show, citing an illness in his family. Instead, another opening act, The Gadget White Band, would perform. Once inside the Center, I heard several folks grumbling that they had come to see Billy Squier perform, and that their night was already a disappointment.

And also once inside the Center, the second disappointment of the night – sparse attendance! By the time Bad Company hit the stage, the Bryce Jordan Center attendance would swell to its peak of about 1/3 of the way full. After all the fuss and hoopla generated over the Bad Company reunion tour, this lack of crowd was definitely a surprise and a disappointment.

In any case, the show must go on, and soon we would learn if the Gadget White Band could at least hold their own with this crowd and ease the disappointment of Billy Squier's no-show. After QWK-Rock morning dork Chris Prospero (I'm sorry, QWK's morning show is about as amusing as a funeral) randomly awarded several attendees front row seats, he introduced the Gadget White Band. Based out of Washington, D.C., this group had caught the attention of Bad Company during the group's prior performance there, and was invited to open for Bad Company in the wake of Billy Squier's cancellation. This co-ed group is actually named after its chief singer/songwriter, Gadget White. As we would quickly learn, Gadget has quite a voice, as she booms out powerful vocals with lots of range and emotion. Also unique to Gadget White Band was the prominence of a violinist, Helen Hausmann. Aiko Butler plays guitar, Donna Katrinic bass and keys, and Mike Watkins drums. Gadget White Band played a 30-minute set of mostly original material, including songs from their debut CD. Being unfamiliar with their songs, the only title I caught was "Bring You Back." The group drew more and more applause as their set proceeded – obviously this audience realized that the Gadget White Band was giving their half-hour in the spotlight their best effort, and they were appreciative of that effort. Even the guy seated at my right, grumbling beforehand about Billy Squier's cancellation, thought Gadget White Band did a good job. The group sealed their set with a familiar number the classic rock audience would know – a convincing version of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," with Aiko's guitar and Helen's violin fireworks emulating the Jimmy Page pyrotechnics nicely. Gadget White Band came through their trial by fire in flying colors, and was politely received and applauded by the Bryce Jordan Center audience.

During the intermission, I sat, still astonished at the poor attendance of this concert, and wondering why nobody was here. Was it that people just weren't excited about coming to see the reunion of Bad Company? Or was the Bryce Jordan Center's reputation of lackluster acoustics and strict security/behavior guidelines starting to catch up with it? And maybe it was the fact that this was the summer season, and the student populace that normally supports rock concerts here at the Bryce was mostly home for the summer, leaving only residents, locals and classic rock aficionados to support this concert.

After an average intermission period, the house lights went down and Bad Company emerged onstage. Mountain Mel and I had an unofficial wager on what song Bad

Company would open with; her prediction of "Can't Get Enough" was correct. And as the set began to unfold, we quickly realized that Bad Company, despite the years apart, sounded together and on the mark. Singer Paul Rodgers quickly established himself as the central figure onstage, soulfully crooning his lines while rhythmically swaying to the groove. His support cast – guitarist Mick Ralphs, bassist Boz Burrell and drummer Simon Kirke – solidly cranked out the crunch behind him, and many of the Bryce Jordan attendees were quickly moving and grooving along.

We also quickly realized that the Bryce Jordan Center's reputation for bad acoustics wasn't about to improve on this night. As "Can't Get Enough" entered its first seconds, the bass drum and bass rumble started the bleacher seats resonating in thunderous unison, creating a low-end din throughout the arena that underscored the rest of Bad Company's set. While rumbling bleachers may feed the atmosphere of excitement during Penn State basketball games, they severely hamper the atmosphere of this venue during rock concerts! The sound quality was bad to say the least.

Paul and Bad Company launched "Honey Child" off Run With The Pack, before doing two more from the Bad Co. debut, "Rock Steady" and "Ready For Love." The reunited Bad Company had composed several new songs for their recently-released CD set The Original Bad Company Anthology, and did one of those next – "Tracking Down A Runaway." The group then went into their legendary ode to rock stardom gone awry, "Shooting Star" – doing the song in the key of G, and rallying the crowd to sing along with the choruses. The group then slowed it down for one of the highlights of their set, as Paul Rodgers and Mick Ralphs both strapped on acoustic guitars and did the ballad "Seagull" off the Bad Co. debut. Paul's son then joined him onstage for another acoustic duet on "Soul Of Love." The tempo then picked up for "Movin' On," "Hammer Of Love" from Anthology, and the group's remake of "Youngblood," which sounded a bit lower key than the version off Run With The Pack. Bad Company continued with the hit from Anthology, "Hey Hey," before rousing versions of "Feel Like Making Love" and "Rock and Roll Fantasy" to end their set.

At this point, while I knew we would get an encore, I was checking my watch. Bad Company had played just barely over an hour. They hadn't done "Good Lovin' Gone Bad," "Gone Gone Gone," "Crazy Circles," "Run With The Pack," or "Bad Company" yet. So I figured we might be in for a chunky encore, as the night was still young.

After the under-populated Bryce Jordan Center loudly called for the group's return, a piano was rolled onstage, and Bad Company came out for the encore. Paul Rodgers situated himself behind the piano, and tapped out the opening chords to "Run With The Pack," bringing boisterous approval from the gathered crowd. After this song, Paul then remained behind the keyboard to tap out another recognizable Bad Company song opening – to their much-anticipated title song, "Bad Company," which brought about the loudest applause of the night.

I was hopeful they would do more, but Bad Company left the stage, and the house lights came up. No "Good Lovin' Gone Bad." No "Gone Gone Gone." No "Crazy Circles." No "Burnin' Sky." And to Mountain Mel's chagrin, they didn't do her favorite tune, "Silver Blue & Gold," either. An hour and fifteen minutes after they started, Bad Company was finished for the night.

The crowd exiting the Jordan Center was not the most jubilant. I heard a few folks grumbling about Bad Company's set length, especially considering that Billy Squier didn't show up. And in the end analysis, the sum total of the show's downfalls – Bad Company's short set, Billy Squier's non-attendance, the Jordan Center's lousy acoustics, the lousy attendance for the concert, and lack of room in the Jordan Center's bleacher section for Mountain Mel to stand and get crazy – outweighed the two positives, Bad Company's quality of performance and the Gadget White Band. Definitely this one would not go into the books as one of the better concerts the Bryce Jordan Center has hosted, and – given the Center's already-tarnished reputation regarding rock concerts – not a show that will help improve that reputation. A disappointment.

"THE ROCK NEVER STOPS" TOUR w/TED NUGENT/NIGHT RANGER/QUIET RIOT/SLAUGHTER @ TUSSEY MOUNTAIN AMPHITHEATER, BOALSBURG 7/1/99

The first time I ever saw Ted Nugent live was at the Cambria County War Memorial in Johnstown in 1985. I remembered two things about that show...First, the unannounced opening act was Savatage, and I was one of very few people who knew enough about the band to want to even see their opening set, let alone go against the grain and yell for them to go longer than their allotted 30 minutes - whilst the rest of the arena yelled for Nugent! And I also remembered nearly blacking out from the crowd crush once Savatage finished and everybody surged forward for Ted Nugent...I actually had to step out of the crowd - giving up my strategic good spot near stagefront - because I became nauseous and was in danger of praying to the porcelain god (I didn't).

The second time I witnessed the Motor City Madman, he wasn't such a madman...It was Ted's solo appearance at Lakemont Park in Altoona as part of an archery and hunting seminar. Ted was there to promote archery and hunting, and performed some acoustic stuff - including what would eventually become his most popular anthem in the 90's, "Fred Bear." This happened in spring of 1990, just as Damn Yankees was coming out.

So I was due for a good dose of Nugent rock and roll. And this tour - "The Rock Never Stops" tour - would give me that dose. And besides Ted, I would also get to see the original Night Ranger, Quiet Riot and Slaughter.

The forecast this night was for stormy weather, and a severe thunderstorm watch was in effect for the area as I headed to the outdoor Tussey Mountain Amphitheater. Skies looked threatening as I arrived at the venue. But fortunately, only a few drops of rain fell during Slaughter's set; the rest of the event was windy, but dry.

The only thing that was stormy was my mood after I purchased my lawn ticket. On the way to the concert, QWK-Rock announced on air that lawn seats were available for \$25. But once I walked up to the ticket window, I was pleasantly informed by the attendant that my lawn ticket cost \$35. I told her I thought the price was \$25, but she again repeated \$35. I had already driven an hour to get there, and had sacrificed a night off work to attend, so what was I to do? I paid the damned \$35, grumbling as I stepped away from the ticket window. Yes, even I get screwed at venues once in a while. But I knew that I had an effective means of payback – report Tussey's padding of the ticket price the night of the concert in my [PA Musician](#) article and here

in the Cut. The power of the press. Consider yourselves now forewarned - if you decide to attend an concert at Tussey, you may need to do a roadtrip to buy your tickets in advance or buy them through the internet, because if you wait until the night of the concert, you may get burned like I did.

Now that I was already ten dollars over my planned budget for the evening, I decided to forego purchasing any of Tussey's concessions for the night, and amid a light drizzle and brisk wind, walked into the lawn seating area for a vantage point to view Slaughter, who had just commenced their set. Slaughter was into "Eye To Eye" as I arrived, and they introduced "Burning Bridges." As the openers of the night, I was to soon discover that Slaughter was allotted very little time to perform, as they did only three more songs - "Mad About You," the hit ballad "Fly to the Angels," and their best-known song, "Up All Night." But as small consolation at least, singer/namesake Mark Slaughter announced that the band would be autographing photographs under a nearby tent after their set.

Five songs isn't a whole lot to judge a band by, but from what I saw, Slaughter did a capable job. I also had to keep in mind that this group was bouncing back from tragedy, as guitarist Jeff Blando was replacing Tim Kelly, who was killed in an auto accident early last year. Jeff seemed to fit in comfortably with Slaughter onstage, and overall, Slaughter gave a friendly, powerful performance.

During the break between bands, I located and traded show notes with the Big Man, Dave Rainey, and his younger brother. I didn't have to be a brain surgeon to know who the Big Man was here to see this evening - Ted Nugent.

What light drizzle there was during Slaughter's set had largely subsided by the time the next band, Quiet Riot, was ready to go. Having seen Quiet Riot twice at new Sebastiano's, I was anxious to check them out again, especially the Metal Health line-up with Rudy Sarzo playing bass. The band took the Tussey stage, and singer Kevin DuBrow, donning a red-and-white hat, saluted the crowd as Quiet Riot began with an uptempo version of "Sign of the Times," complete with a Who "Long Live Rock" midsection. The band immediately segued into "Slick Black Cadillac" and their cover of Slade's "Mama Weer All Crazee Now." Kevin DuBrow again welcomed everyone to The Rock Never Stops Tour, labeling it "the most politically incorrect tour around." He then introduced the song "Angry," off Quiet Riot's newly-released album, *Alive and Well*. Then, an interesting moment that illustrated just who was in charge of this tour and who had top priority...Kevin introduced "Cum On Feel the Noize" to the audience, before somebody stepped stagefront and apparently advised him that there was time left for only one more song. So Kevin queried the audience on which song they would rather hear - "Noize" or "Metal Health (Bang Your Head)?" "Metal Health" won slightly louder applause, so it became the finisher in Quiet Riot's abbreviated set.

What Quiet Riot did onstage sounded good, at least as good as the two prior times I had witnessed the group at new Sebastiano's. But due to the time constraint, a lot was missing - Carlos Cavaso's "Battle Axe" guitar solo, obviously "Cum On Feel The Noize," "Let's Get Crazy" and other QR classics. Even ten minutes more would have enabled Quiet Riot to get the important stuff in. But 20-25 minutes wasn't really long enough to satisfy this observer, especially still itching from having to dish out the extra tenspot at the ticket window!

Tussey Mountain Amphitheater had two different seating areas this night - general admission lawn seats and Gold Circle. Gold Circle seating enabled you to go inside a square area in front of the stage, cordoned off from the lawn seating area only by a line of yellow police tape. The perimeter of this area was being patrolled by Tussey security personnel, but as the night progressed and attention spans of security personnel grew shorter, more daring concert fans began sneaking under/over the police tape into the better seating section. Having been victimized by the ten dollar surcharge, I admit it was very tempting to try to go over into the Gold Circle section myself. But ultimately I played by the rules this night, and stayed in the lawn area for the duration. And as security became aware of people sneaking into the Gold Circle area, they tightened up their watch on the perimeter.

Soon Night Ranger was ready to go. And unlike the two times I had witnessed the band before - in Windber Stadium in 1993 and at Dougherty's in Johnstown in 1996 - this would be the total original Night Ranger line-up. Singer/bassist Jack Blades, guitarists Brad Gillis and Jeff Watson, keyboard man Alan "Fitz" Gerald, and singer/drummer Kelly Keagy had reunited for this special tour, and we would see how the original line-up measured up to the other two Night Ranger line-ups I witnessed. Night Ranger started off with "Touch of Madness," and at least at first I thought they sounded a bit off. But that would quickly change as the group proceeded more into their set and the adrenaline started flowing...Night Ranger did "Rumors In The Air," and then Kelly Keagy sang lead on "Send Me Away." Jack Blades explained to the crowd that this was the first time this band line-up had played together in several years, and that he was enjoying it. He then introduced a song that had become the favorite backseat anthem of the 80's - the ballad "Sister Christian." From there, the tempo picked back up and never slowed again, as Kelly sang lead on "When You Close Your Eyes," and the band finished their 30-minute set in a blaze of glory with rampaging versions of "Don't Tell Me You Love Me" and "(You Can Still) Rock In America."

This was the most impressive set of the night thus far, despite the somewhat shaky start. Night Ranger picked up the ball and ran with it, and escalated the excitement level with each song clear to the end. The fans were going nuts by the time "Rock In America" had ended, and it was clear that only one act could possibly step in and keep the momentum going at this point - Ted Nugent.

I had managed to maneuver myself fairly close to the stage, even for being outside the "Gold Circle" area. I conversed with a few other 'Toona fans I had recognized, as we all awaited the Nuge's arrival onstage.

We wouldn't have to wait too long...Soon the Motor City Madman would take the stage and turn boys into men...Ted, along with drummer Tommy Aldridge and bassist Michael Lutz, were quickly underway and rocking on both older Nugent standards and new numbers. "Free For All" and "Dog Eat Dog" both prefaced Ted's first words to the audience this afternoon, as he acknowledged that he was in "Keystoney," and introduced "Snakeskin Cowboys." After "Wang Dang Sweet Poontang," Ted introduced the other two members of his band this night, and gave a little political commentary - commenting that "The whole world sucks, but America sucks a whole lot less," as he threw a few digs in at the Oval Office. He then sent "Kiss My Ass" out to the President and First Lady. Michael Lutz - a former guitarist for Brownsville Station, then sang lead on the most famous song he wrote as a member of that band - "Smokin' In The Boys Room." Then Ted's outdoors side kicked in, as he started a

campfire at the very front of the stage, and began speaking words about a famous outdoorsman whose spirit reigned in the great outdoors that night – "Fred Bear." Ted then introduced the next song as "the sexiest lick I ever created, apologized to the men in the house while devoting "Stranglehold" to the women present. Coming out of "Stranglehold," though, Ted corrected himself, conceding that "Stranglehold" wasn't his sexiest lick, but his next song was – "Cat Scratch Fever." And as the crowd went nuts and the song rocked along, it built to the climax of the whole set – using several guitars this night, the Nuge took one of his Gibson's, positioned it upright at the rear of the stage, took a flaming arrow, and shot it straight into the center of the axe, proclaiming it a sacrifice. Then holding the mortally wounded guitar up in front of the crowd, Ted ended his set by generating feedback on the instrument and exiting the stage while the feedback blared. This din continued as the crowd went absolutely crazy demanding the encore, and the feedback only ended when Ted and his bandmates returned to the stage for the encore. Ted gave Happy Valley one more song this night – "Great White Buffalo."

The legend that was Ted Nugent reigned this night. Ted the Motor City Madman, Ted the axeman, Ted the "If you want to mellow out, you can just get the #\$\$% out of here" rocker, and Ted the outdoorsman. It was all here this night. As I watched this man in action, it was hard to believe he was now in his early 50's! Ted still can talk the talk and rock the rock, and still jam a mean guitar – he was every bit the personality I expected to see on that stage this night. And it was clear by night's end why Ted Nugent was the headliner on this bill – the man delivers the goods! Mostly all the songs we came to hear were performed, plus the high energy execution from the man and his bandmates, themselves established musicians in their own right. Bottom line – Ted Nugent came, saw and conquered...again! For me, it was almost enough to make me forget my debacle at the ticket gate earlier. Definitely it was the best I have seen from the Nuge yet, and proof that the man is definitely NOT past his prime yet! Indeed, The Rock Never Stops, and it sure showed no signs of slowing down this night, either!

(**ED. NOTE:** At presstime, it was just announced that Ted Nugent will be appearing at Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center Mar. 28 through Apr. 2, 2000, during the Pennsylvania Hunting and Outdoors Show.)

TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS/LUCINDA WILLIAMS @ HERSHEY STADIUM 7/5/99

Tom Petty, over the years, has become what I like to think of as a "quiet rock legend." Tom quietly surfaced in the late 70's, and over the years has developed a steady and unwavering body of work. All of his albums have been consistent, and each gave us at least one or two truly memorable songs that contributed to the Petty legend. Lo and behold, 20 years after he surfaced, Petty has graduated into the realm of "classic rock" - yet, with his new album Echo, his music still sounds fresh and current.

I never have been a big Petty fan per se...I liked most of his songs over the years, but only two - "Here Comes My Girl" off Damn The Torpedoes and "Running Down A Dream" off Full Moon Fever - have ever nailed me so convincingly that I had to go out and buy their respective albums. Petty's other songs were good, but just didn't excite me enough to want to spend money on other Petty albums or to go see him in concert.

But over the years, I heard more and more fans who were impressed by Petty's live show, and more and more I became curious about checking out a Petty concert someday. And after Schtiv D'Door won a pair of Petty tickets on Q94 and offered me one of them, that someday had arrived, and Schtiv, the Beer God and I were on our way to see Petty.

We survived the trek to Hershey despite riding in upper 90's temperatures and without A-C. As we arrived at Hershey Stadium, we were surprised to discover the police state that was the Hershey Stadium parking lot. The beer Gestapo was in full force, as we saw "Pacific Blue" bike patrols cracking down on anybody seen holding a cold one in the lot. In the most impressive display, we saw the Pacific Blue and SWAT squads converge on a group of young fans with beer, seemingly arresting one of them and making a show of force in the lot for all others to see (we later heard that one of the fans was under 21 years of age, and that his father had been busted for supplying a beer to his own kid!). Quite a far cry from the much friendlier confines of Coca Cola Star Lake near Pittsburgh, where open beer consumption in the parking lot is permitted as long as you are not behaving like an idiot. Seasoned concertgoers that we were, though, we soon overcame this minor inconvenience and devised our methods of consuming the cold ones we had brought along in the trunk. "Yes, sir, this is Galliker's Iced Tea from western PA. See the creamy head! It's a totally new kind of tea!"

So after a good hour observing the Keystone Kops beer Gestapo comedy show in the lot, we made our way into Hershey Stadium, only to learn the REAL reason for the beer crackdown in the lot outside. Why let people drink beer in the lot, when you can force them to pay \$5 for a pounder draft once they get inside the Stadium? And I thought the Hershey Stadium officials and local police were just trying to protect the sterile environment of their family-oriented amusement facility. Damn hypocrites!

Opener Lucinda Williams was onstage performing as we entered the stadium. Opting to procure our souvenir T-shirts early, we didn't really pay much attention to her set. Lucinda was okay, I guess...Her sound was song-oriented mainstream rock, perhaps suggesting a touch of Bonnie Raitt. The audience cheered, and seemed to like her performance. After purchasing our T-shirts and completing the judging on the "Miss Tom Petty Concert" competition (it's a male-bonding guy thing), we made our way to our nosebleed seats to observe Tom Petty's set.

Soon the stadium lights darkened, and Mr. Petty and his veteran band commenced, kicking off their set with "Jammin' Me," and stepping up the tempo with "Runnin' Down A Dream." Petty and the Heartbreakers then did "Breakdown," which quickly turned into a crowd sing-along; and then introduced a song from the new Echo CD. Then another crowd favorite, "Don't Do Me Like That," followed by "I Don't Wanna Fight" from the Echo album, sung by guitarist Mike Campbell. The string of Petty hits continued with "Mary Jane's Last Dance," "I Won't Back Down," "Listen to Her Heart," "You Don't Know How It Feels" and "It's Good to be King," after which Tom introduced the rest of the Heartbreakers...keyboard man Benmont Tench, bassist Howie Epstein, drummer Steve Ferrone, aforementioned guitarist Mike Campbell, and guitarist Scott Thurston – who Petty called the "Swiss army knife" of the band. Tom then left his players have the limelight, and they did a surf-guitar-like jam, dropping in riffs from "The Spy Who Loved Me," "The Exorcist" and Neil Young. After this adventurous little instrumental workout, Tom Petty and band continued with "Don't Come Around Here No More," a sincere acoustic take on "Walls" from She's

the One, and one of my personal faves off the new Echo disc, "Room at the Top." After "You got Lucky," Petty and the Heartbreakers did "Free Girl Now" off the new album, "You Wreck Me," and "American Girl" to finish the set.

Almost instantaneously, lighters from throughout the half-full stadium ignited, and the crowd roar for more music quickly intensified, as Hershey Stadium indeed wanted more Petty. After a few short moments, Petty and his bandmates re-emerged onstage, and gave Hershey Stadium three more songs to finish off the night. The encore opened with "Free Fallin,'" before Tom and company did a singalong rendition of "Gloria," and ended the night with "Learning to Fly."

Like everyone told me beforehand, Tom Petty indeed delivered an excellent show live. And the reason it is excellent is the reason concerts should be excellent - the music mattered first and foremost. There was no particularly elaborate lighting displays, fireworks or excess glitz or gloss. It was Tom Petty and his band, playing their songs and meaning every note. Each tune this night sounded sincere, honest and genuine; and

the band performing them was devoid of pretensions, egos or pomposity.

Another thing I liked about Tom Petty this night, that came across through the entire course of the set, was consistency. Tom Petty's library of songs from throughout his career are steady and consistent, cohesively flowing along, attached by that trademark Petty signature throughout. New songs from the Echo CD sounded perfectly at home alongside time-tested Petty classics, with no weak spots anywhere along the way.

Bottom line, this show was just good, solid American rock and roll, and we left the venue feeling a sense of fulfillment, like Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers actually communicated with most everyone in that arena that night - even those of us in the nosebleed seats. After all these years hearing about Petty's live show, and despite summer heat and the Gestapo-like atmosphere we had to endure before getting into this venue, I'm glad to have finally gotten to check out Tom Petty live - it was indeed a worthwhile concert, and I could definitely see myself going back to see Petty once again when the opportunity next arises. If you are any sort of Tom Petty fan - even borderline like me - I recommend you catch him in concert as well.

STEVE MILLER BAND/GEORGE THOROGOOD @ COCA COLA STAR LAKE AMPHITHEATER, BURGETTSTOWN, PA 7/24/99

Knowing that this concert was happening on a Saturday night, I had contemplated the possibility of attending this one. But as the day approached, I didn't know anyone who wanted or was available to go to this concert...or so I thought. I walked into Coconuts to procure my paycheck on the day of the show, and Big Jim inquired if I might be interested in attending. It turned out that he and Cut "Beer God" Mike Fornari both found they were off work early enough to attend this concert. Suddenly, I was in on the plan, and by late afternoon, we were off to the "Burgh to witness two rock legends.

Or as it turned out...one. Parkway gridlock and detours when we attempted a shortcut around the gridlock caused us to arrive late at the Star Lake, late enough to miss openers Curtis Salgado and...yes...George Thorogood. We actually arrived at the

gate just as Thorogood was finishing his set. I later heard mixed reviews of George Thorogood, with some observers saying he kicked butt, and others saying he didn't show enthusiasm and went through the motions. We missed it, so I guess we'll never quite know.

In any case, to our surprise, Coca Cola Star Lake was PACKED! Just as much as during OzzFest (reviewed earlier). And get this – the crowd was ROWDIER than OzzFest! As in drunker, crazier and less behaved! The "Beer God" reported observing three separate fisticuff altercations en route to and from the tour T-shirt concession during Steve Miller's set. Who would have figured?

Big Jim and I braved the mass of humanity to obtain some of the high-priced Star Lake nachos, pizza and brewski (sorry about losing that hot pretzel, Jim!). Steve Miller commenced his set of sounds as we were stuck in the food concession crowd crush, but we could hear as Steve began with "Swingtown," "True Fine Love" and "The Stake." As we returned to our position in the lawn seating area, Steve went into a blues segment, where he invited on stage the show opener, Curtis Salgado, and the two jammed on several early blues numbers. After this, Steve pretty much delivered the hits. "Living in the U.S.A.," "Abracadabra," followed by "Fly Like An Eagle," where Steve's keyboard player did a rapping midsection, as Steve showed off his alligator-skin guitar. "Wild Mountain Honey," an acoustic version of Sam Cooke's "You Send Me," "Dance Dance Dance," "Take The Money and Run," "Jungle Love," and a singalong version of "Rock'n'Me" were among the highlights of Steve's main set.

Obviously, with this mass of humanity present, you KNEW an encore was coming, and shortly, Steve and band re-emerged for the first encore, doing "The Joker." This was fun, as the Star Lake hordes chimed in and made it into a singalong. Steve tried to call it a night at this point, but no way...the crowd still wanted more. Steve returned one more time, this time with "Jet Airliner." Steve threw an environmental slant into this song, repeating several times to the crowd the mantra "Take care of Mother Earth, and she'll take care of you." The song – and the concert – ended with Steve tossing guitar picks out to the stagefront audience.

I was pretty impressed with Steve Miller's live show. The man is definitely a showman, and not afraid to ham it up on his guitars, frequently doing slidework and other flashy soloing. But I found Steve Miller to be gracious in his presentation, several times expounding upon certain songs for the crowd. Before "Wild Mountain Honey," for example, Steve showed off a special guitar – a unique 19-string guitar that, he explained, he bought as a kid for \$5 in a New York pawn shop. He then explained that the axe was now worth \$25 grand! It apparently was the guitar he used for the spacey effects on that song.

With such a zoo atmosphere inside the Coca Cola Star Lake, there was only one thing left to do this night before heading home to Altoona – watch the psycho circus that is the Star Lake parking lot after any major concert! (Actually, we didn't have much choice, as we were in one of the lots further back from the entrance, and had to wait for the gridlock to clear before heading out.) We observed all sorts of freaks - drunks, testosterone-fueled teen males, crying women, a couple "getting into it" on the ground right under a spotlight, and other interesting sideshows as well.

But upon leaving the Coca Cola Star Lake environs, I could cross off another major rock artist I finally got to witness live. And Steve Miller put on a good enough show this night, that I would not rule out a possible return to see him again at a future concert.

**BLACK SABBATH/GODSMACK/DRAIN S.T.H. @ HERSHEY STADIUM,
HERSHEY, PA 8/12/99**

Having already seen the reunited Black Sabbath at OzzFest (reviewed earlier), I initially hadn't planned to attend this post-OzzFest appearance of Black Sabbath. But this show pretty much fell into my lap. Q94 was giving away tickets and a bus ride to Hershey Stadium for this concert, and I was asked if I was interested in being the official Q94 delegate aboard the "Magic Bus." Duh.

As I was allowed to bring one guest, the obvious choice was Schtiv the Door. Not only was Schtiv obviously an Ozzy aficionado like me, but I knew that with some of the listeners we had aboard this ride, I needed a good bodyguard.

The ride down to Hershey had one big thrill, which took place as the bus was passing Tyrone. One of the passengers started going into convulsions and spitting up blood. Fortunately, another passenger had a cellular phone and called 911, and arranged to have an ambulance from Tyrone Hospital meet up with the bus just off the Tyrone Exit off I-99. The afflicted passenger had regained consciousness and was semi-alert as the ambulance arrived, and seemed dazed more than anything. He was taken aboard the ambulance to Tyrone Hospital, and we continued on our merry way. The next morning, we would learn that the guy's convulsions were drug-related. Idiot! Fortunately, Q94 made everyone sign a release saying if any passengers got out of hand, the station was not responsible for them.

Upon arriving in Hershey and grubbing at a nearby Wendy's, we were ready for action. And as we emerged from our bus in the Hershey Stadium parking lot, we discovered that the Hershey Stadium security Gestapo was ready for action too. We saw the Pacific Blue bike patrols like we saw at the Tom Petty concert earlier, plus horseback patrols. Hold it, were we attending a rock concert, or was there a breakout from a nearby penitentiary? It even took me two attempts to get a camera past the overzealous gate personnel (as if photos from my little point-and-shoot Advantix, taken from our nosebleed seats in the stands, were going to deprive Ozzy or his promoters out of poster/photo revenue – GET SERIOUS!). But I did get the camera in (Nyah!! Nyah!!). And at the beer concessions, where brews were \$5 a pounder draft (the REAL reason Hershey security didn't want anyone consuming alcohol in the parking lot outside), beer sales were limited to one beer per person per visit, and EVERYONE was carded. In fact, the same lady carded me twice, even though she had carded me before and I clearly look way beyond 21 years of age! Talk about overkill! And poor Schtiv made the mistake of leaving his photo ID's at home, so the beer folks wouldn't serve him.

Security overkill aside, there was a concert to be seen. Drain S.T.H. was up first. We observed them from outside the stadium, as we had some extra tickets we wanted to bestow upon some of the less fortunate (and nicely endowed, eh Schtiv!) Even outside the stadium, Drain S.T.H. sounded good and forceful, hammering new songs from their Freaks of Nature CD like "Enter My Mind" and "Simon Says;" and earlier faves from their Horror Wrestling disc like "I Don't Mind" and "Serve the Shame."

Judging by the volume of applause resounding from within the stadium, Drain STH had found a more than receptive crowd in Hershey this night.

After contending with the Eastern Bloc border guard Gestapo that was ticket gate customs, but finally getting both my camera and myself inside; and after Schtiv and I both dealt with the overzealous beer line Gestapo (interesting these folks would be so tough on customers, especially considering the profit they stood to make from the high mark-up on every beer sold), we finally made our way to our respective seats, again high up in the nosebleed section of the stands, with the other members of our bus trip entourage. One listener, Dale, upon hearing about my difficulty getting my camera through customs, laughingly pulled his camera out of his pocket...Not a brain surgeon by any stretch of the imagination, Dale nonetheless got his camera into the stadium on first try. (Nyah Nyah again, Hershey Gestapo!)

Within a few minutes, Godsmack took the stage to rock the Hershey crowd. The third time I had seen this band in just a few short months, this was the most impressive set I've seen from Godsmack yet. Perhaps it had to do with the national mega-success the group is presently enjoying – though Black Sabbath was obviously the headlining act at Hershey Stadium this night, it seemed a LOT of the assembled audience was heavily cheering on Godsmack as well, which seemed to fire the band up into an even more intense and spirited performance. The group powered through the highlight tracks from their CD such as "Moon Baby," "Keep Away," "Time Bomb," "Get Up, Get Out," "Situation," and ultimately, "Whatever," which singer Sully and bandmates made into an audience-participation number. Definitely this was the year for Godsmack, and pairing up with the godfathers of heavy metal, Black Sabbath, was only helping them enjoy bigger success.

As I alluded to in my OzzFest review of Black Sabbath earlier, Sabbath's OzzFest set was pretty much a blur to me due to fatigue and a bad headache. Fortunately, I was suffering no such ill effects at Hershey Stadium this night, and could observe Sabbath in greater detail. Ozzy, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward kicked off their set, stagetop water hoses a-blasting, with "War Pigs," and proceeded to tear through a steady barrage of classic numbers – "N.I.B.," "Fairies Wear Boots," "After Forever," "Electric Funeral," "Sweet Leaf" (during which video footage of the cult classic anti-pot film Reefer Madness adorned the video screen behind the band), "Into the Void," the group title song "Black Sabbath," "Iron Man" and "Children of Tomorrow" to end the set. After the expected audience eruption demanding an encore, Ozzy and Sabbath returned to the stage, teased the intro to "Supernaut," before suddenly veering into "Paranoid" to end the night.

By this point in their tour, Black Sabbath had pretty much worked the bugs/cobwebs out, so that the songs were presented at a tight pace and clip without interruption. Ozzy Osbourne was again fired up and happy to be onstage, frequently thanking the audience for being there. And his voice was again in decent form this night. The rest of Sabbath seemed pretty content and inspired this night as well, as we witnessed animated performances and lots of motion from all three. There was the agitated light show, fog, pyro, and the periodic shower of water drenching the stagefront audience from hoses high above the stage. For all intents and purposes, the "Last Supper" was a rock concert "last party" with an overall festive vibe through the entire evening.

So at long last, the reunion concert tour that was never supposed to happen finally did, and we got to check out one of rock's most legendary and influential bands during their "Last Supper." Black Sabbath's reunion tour will wind down in late fall, ending where it all began in Birmingham, England sometime in November/December. Then Black Sabbath will disband, with all four members undertaking solo projects. Fortunately, we were able to partake in this historic tour one last time this night, and despite the hassles we endured to get inside, this night and concert was well worth it. We were glad to be a part of history this night.

**DEF LEPPARD/MOON DOG MANE @ TUSSEY MOUNTAIN AMPHITHEATER,
BOALSBURG 8/27/99**

If you had asked me at the beginning of the year if I would have been interested in checking out Def Leppard in concert, I'm not sure I would have replied "yes." After all, at that point, I was still swooning over the Slang CD, and had lost my faith in the Leps. But Euphoria has been steadily growing on me since its release, and when the concert date at Tussey Mt. Amphitheater was announced, I knew I had to check it out.

Though I had hoped to attend this concert with friends, attrition took its toll and I wound up making the journey myself. I figured I would arrive at Tussey Mountain Amphitheater in time to catch the whole show.

I figured wrong. Just as I cleared State College and Route 322 was narrowing into one lane near Boalsburg, I came upon the slowdown, as traffic was backed up at least a good half-mile from the Tussey entrance. I waited in line to get parked like everybody else...From the time I reached the back of the line until the time I finally got parked, it was 45 minutes – and late enough that I heard only the last few notes and final audience cheers for openers Moon Dog Mane as I walked toward the entrance gate. At least I would get into the venue in plenty of time to see Def Leppard.

Unlike my earlier experience at Tussey during The Rock Never Stops Tour, I had a free ticket to this one, so I didn't have to worry about any extra ten-dollar surcharge at the gate. And unlike that earlier concert, this one was general admission "seating" (translation: survival-of-the-fittest crowding in front of the stage), with no gold circle seats or special seating. So I did an end-around to the front of the stage area, and worked my way in to a fairly close vantage point just to the right of the stagefront area. The crowd was packed fairly tightly, and with beer flowing freely, I was wondering just how crazy it might get if the folks in back surged forward – would it be survival of the fittest? We would soon find out.

After holding my position for about 20-25 minutes, it was showtime...Def Leppard took the stage, and opened with "Rock Rock Til You Drop." The crowd didn't surge, and the crowd – including lots of women – started grooving in place to the band. The Leps then went into "Demolition Man" off the new Euphoria album, and the group seemed pretty fired up...Singer Joe Elliott strode back and forth at the foot of the stage, while guitarists Vivian Campbell and Phil Collen, bassist Rick Savage and drummer Rick Allen played it tight and uptempo behind him. Joe then greeted the Happy Valley crowd, introducing the band and introducing the next song as "something we like to do...Women." Already I was pleasantly surprised, as I wasn't expecting the band to pull this song out! Obviously in the live setting, Def Leppard

had returned to the rock that made them big to begin with, and their resurrection from the Slang misstep was apparently complete. The crowd was totally into it, and I found myself and one other guy in the enviable position of being totally surrounded by women! Life was good. Def Leppard then went into "Too Late For Love," and then the title song from Hysteria. The group then stepped up the tempo for the hit "Animal," and something interesting happened...Some drunken nimrod tried to launch himself airborne to attempt to body-surf his way forward – but the women in the vicinity of where I was would have no part of it, and stuffed the dude, sending him toppling backward and crashing back to earth – EXCELLENT! Another cool thing happened – as the idiot was being denied in his body-surfing quest, his foot inadvertently caught my Penn State ballcap and sent it to the ground to be trampled; but one alert woman nearby spotted the cap, picked it up and handed it back to me. Courtesy at a rock concert – now I had seen everything! Meanwhile, the Leps continued with "Foolin'" and then the new single from Euphoria, "Paper Sun." Not wanting to totally disregard Slang, the group did pull one off that album, the disco-beat "All I Want Is Everything." Alright, I'll tolerate one song from Slang...no more! Def Leppard then went into the comeback hit from Euphoria, "Promises," before announcing and performing the next single from that album, the ballad "Goodbye." For the rest of the way, nothing but hits..."Love Bites," "Armageddon It," and then "Photograph," which inspired something I haven't seen at a concert for a long time – bras flying up on stage! The Leps were up for the party as well, as Viv Campbell flipped his guitar upside down to reveal an offer for females to win a million dollars instantly by flipping something of theirs up – their tops! (None seemed to take him up on the offer initially.) "Rocket," "Pour Some Sugar On Me" and "Rock of Ages" brought Def Leppard's initial set to a close. The group exited the stage, with drummer Rick Allen drawing the most applause, obviously in admiration of his ability to overcome accident-induced disability to perform this night.

The Tussey crowd immediately erupted to demand more Def Leppard, and soon the group returned to the stage, with Joe Elliott praising the audience and thanking them for the support. The group then did "Let's Get Rocked," improvising on the lyrics slightly during the line "I guess a _____ is out of the question" (I'd go into specifics, but this is a PG-13 rag). And then the finale of the encore, and the song that got me going ballistic – all night I had been waiting for the group to pull something either off High and Dry (still their best album in my book) or their debut On Through The Night – to end the night, they pulled "Let It Go" from the former album...my night was now complete!

Def Leppard was well worth the solo journey and the wait in traffic. Their overall sound was perhaps the cleanest sound I have ever heard at a concert - everything was very clear and concise, with the guitars cleanly ringing forth, Joe Elliott's voice and the vocal harmonies coming through loud and clear, and the bass and drums underscoring but never overriding the mix. This sound was very balanced – impressive for an outdoor gig especially! Performance-wise, Def Leppard was very concise as well, with all the songs sounding just like the studio recordings. Granted, maybe I would have liked a little more spontaneity displayed, but ultimately I can't complain here, with the sound as clean and precise as it was – very few bands can execute this tightly in the live setting like Def Leppard did this night. I was happy with it. On top of the crisp performance, the band was happy to be there; in fact, they looked pleasantly surprised to find this many people present to see them in a less-populated locale! Perhaps the band was appreciative of their second chance – the fact that they have hit paydirt and returned to the limelight after almost being left for dead by the 90's grunge/punk/ska/modern rock movement.

Anyway, satisfied with the show I had just witnessed, I returned to my car to head homeward...not so fast. As one of the late entrants into the venue parking area, I would also be among the last to be able to leave, as the parking attendants were leaving parking sections out one at a time, and our section was nearly dead last. It took an hour-and-a-half wait to exit the Tussey parking area. I have to wonder, given the parking hassles this night, if Tussey anticipated Def Leppard's comeback would be as strong as it was this night. The parking lot atmosphere and the gridlock entering and leaving almost reminded me of Coca Cola Star Lake near Pittsburgh. If Tussey is to bring in more names of this caliber, parking is a situation they will need to address.

OTIS CLAY @ THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL, PENN STATE ALTOONA CAMPUS, ALTOONA, PA 8/28/99

Technically, I shouldn't count this as a concert, as it was part of the annual African-American Heritage Festival at the Penn State Altoona Campus. But Otis Clay is a nationally-known recording artist, and he and his band smoked. So I'm including them here in my recap of summer concert highlights.

Since its meager start at Garfield Park in Altoona several years ago, the African American Heritage Festival has evolved year-to-year into a quality festival with good entertainment, food, crafts and something for everyone. And having come to appreciate the annual Johnstown Folkfest for its celebration of ethnic diversity and culture, I've come to appreciate the African American Heritage Festival for at least partially fulfilling that need on this side of the mountain, as it celebrates a group of people, their heritage and contribution to our society, both local and national.

As the festival itself has grown, so has the caliber of entertainment. I barely missed Little Buster and the Soul Brothers, who performed prior to my arrival. I did get to see the local talent showcase as I procured some of the special food items being offered up. And prior to Otis Clay's performance, we were treated to some nice vocal work by San Diego-based a cappella trio Pieces, plus a solo harmonica display by Richard Slay.

Before Otis Clay himself appeared, we were warmed up for his performance by his backing band, Platinum. From Chicago, this band was talented enough they could have headlined this festival alone without Otis Clay! I was particularly blown away by the group's guitar player, Hollywood Scott, who showed some INCREDIBLE guitar work, and did a nice job singing vocals on "Mustang Sally" and "Life" (from the movie Life). Next to Otis himself, Hollywood Scott was the performer who left the most lasting impression on me this night, as he would frequently step to the front of the stage and give a clinic on his guitar skills – EXCELLENT!

Having fired the crowd up, Hollywood Scott and Platinum introduced the man of the hour, Otis Clay. A Chicago soul performer whose biggest claims to fame came in the early 70's with Hi Records in Memphis, Otis performed a selection of his best-known tunes, songs from his current album This Time Around, and some older soul classics as well. In the best soul and blues tradition, Otis proved why he was the headliner this day, as he let the music transform his performance from low-key starts into full-blown, emotion-packed ventings of the soul. Otis eventually poured out his soul on each tune, getting the crowd into the spirit of the performance as well. And his band continued to shine; Otis would frequently allow Hollywood Scott to step forward at

midsong and mesmerize the crowd with his guitar skills again and again. After doing new songs like "Nickle and a Dime," "When Hearts Grow Cold" and "I'll Treat You Right," Otis started answering some audience requests, doing Tyrone Davis' "Turn Back the Hands of Time" and the late Otis Redding's "Sittin' at the Dock of the Bay." Along the way, Otis did his best-known hit, "Trying to Live My Life Without You," and also broke into Sam and Dave's "Soul Man" at one point too. By set's end, he had the remaining crowd wildly demanding an encore, and when he returned for a few more songs, he had people of all ages, from kids to senior citizens, dancing in the aisles. And more than once, Hollywood would step down from the stage and walk back through the center aisle, bringing his performance directly to the audience. These seasoned performers were showmen who gave the people what they wanted!

Hats off to Jerry Zolten, who did the legwork to get Otis Clay to perform here this year, and hats off to the African American Heritage Project for putting this show together each year – it just keeps getting bigger and better. Otis Clay lived up to the advance billing, and was a feisty performer well worth checking out.

SAMMY HAGAR & THE WABORITAS/GRAPEVINE/ASHES TO ASHES @ I.C. LIGHT AMPHITHEATER, PITTSBURGH, PA 8/31/99

I had not planned to attend this concert initially, either. But Q94 listener "Mountain Mel's" offer to treat me to the concert, coupled with some gentle arm-twisting, prompted me to sacrifice a night off work to check out the Red Rocker, Sammy Hagar, at the I.C. Light Amphitheater. (Thanks Mel!)

This would be a concert of several firsts for me – the first time ever seeing Sammy Hagar, the first time ever seeing a concert at I.C. Light Amphitheater at Pittsburgh's Station Square, AND...my first time ever DRIVING in Pittsburgh!

Regarding the latter, I was confident I could find the I.C. Light Amphitheater easily, having rode past it with Big Jim en route to the aforementioned Steve Miller Concert at Coca Cola Star Lake. Stay in the left lane on Route 22/376 West after exiting the Squirrel Hill Tunnel, take the Grant Street Exit, hang two left turns to go over the Smithfield Bridge, turn right at the light, and wah-la...we were there! Easy enough getting there, and I handled my first experience in 'Burgh traffic fairly well. Not even any gridlock!

As we were arriving, WDVE aired a stern warning against bringing cameras inside the I.C. Light Amphitheater. I had considered trying it, but the warning prompted me to leave my Advantix in the trunk of my car. (By the way – thanks to Schtiv D'Door's father for fixing the latch on my trunk earlier in the day so it could close properly and valuables could be stored in it once again!) But as I entered the Amphitheater, security was very lax this night, and I could have taken a camera inside with ease had I wanted to. (Using it, though, probably would have been quite a different matter...)

Within seconds of entering the venue, I saw my first familiar face of the evening, Cadillac Tramps singer/guitarist Tony Mollick, working in the house tonight as a spotlight operator during Sammy Hagar's set later on. I told him it was my first driving experience in Pittsburgh ever, to which he replied by asking how I liked his little town. I replied that I could visualize myself working in this town in a few years – who knows?

Also as we arrived, I could hear the recognizable sound of Ashes to Ashes, already onstage. Though the concert was originally slated to start at 7:30, late changes moved up the start time to 7 PM. The group had just started, so Mel and I had not missed much of their set. I quickly moved my way through the thin crowd towards stagefront to surprise the Ashes guys by showing up. I was also curious to see how tunes from the new Plaything CD played out onstage. Ashes to Ashes – singer/guitarist Andy C. Bell, bassist/singer Ed Beeler and drummer Dave Campbell – were proceeding through a set of original tunes from throughout their four-album history... "Wear You Out" from Re-Incarbonated; "7-Day Itch," "86" and the remake of Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation" from the

new Plaything disc; "Sex Beer & Money" from Two Months Two Days; "Radio Red" and "It's All You" from Plaything; and from their debut CD The Square Root Of All Evil, "Car's On Fire" and Ashes to Ashes' trademark finisher, "Eat Me (I'm A Hoagie)." Ashes to Ashes made it count, playing each tune tight and powerful, and steadily upping the craziness with each tune, until Ed stripped to his boxers during "Hoagie," to the laughs/terror of the steadily-building crowd. All the tunes from the new Plaything disc sounded great live, even the studio-gear "86," which takes on a rawer dimension on the live stage. Ashes to Ashes was impressive this night, getting the night to a good hard-rocking start.

As we would soon learn, there was a reason why Ashes to Ashes was playing earlier than scheduled...another band had been added to the bill late, rising Pittsburgh force Grapevine. I had seen Grapevine a few months ago prior at Pellegrine's, and was impressed then by their quality songs and the voice of their singer, Jean-Marc Azoury.

As we would soon learn, though, Grapevine would face a little bit of adversity this night, due to a glitch caused by the schedule change. Ashes to Ashes, assuming Grapevine would be on the main stage, didn't bring any lighting gear for the rear stage, as they would be playing during daylight. But when Sammy Hagar's people relegated Grapevine to playing the rear stage also, Grapevine found themselves playing as the sun was setting, and were performing in almost total darkness by mid-set.

But Grapevine made the best of it, and still played a strong set of all-original tunes – many from their newly-released debut CD, Star. At this point, I was largely still unfamiliar with most of Grapevine's song arsenal, but did recognize a few tunes such as "In My Head" and "Still the Same." But more importantly, I recognized the talent being exhibited on the stage – singer Jean-Marc Azoury has an excellent, full-bodied voice that can reach high notes with power and relative ease. And as songsmiths, Grapevine displayed a knack of crafting smooth, well-woven melodies for Jean-Marc to carry into the stratosphere. And beyond melodies, vocals and harmonies, Grapevine's instrumental talent - former Raquel axe Kevin McDonald, former Dr. No bassist Ken Pardiny and former Marianne Prosperity/Nevermore (Pittsburgh) drummer Chris Jamison - packed solid, muscular rhythms to support Jean-Marc's vocal displays. Out of the rear stage darkness, Grapevine glowed during their set, showing the assembled multitudes why they are one of the 'Burgh's most talked-about bands at the moment.

Assuming that it would be at least a good half-hour until Sammy Hagar took the stage, I stuck around the back to chat with Kevin McDonald of Grapevine. "Mountain

Mel," worried about getting to her seat in time, rushed ahead to locate her seat. Turns out she made the wise decision, as Sammy was set to go within about 15 minutes after Grapevine's set ended. As Sammy's set commenced, though, I didn't panic - choosing instead to rove about at the rear of the seating area and observe Sammy's set from afar, at least initially.

It was no secret that Sammy's favorite hangout was the Cabo Wabo cantina in Mexico. And thus it was no surprise to see how Sammy's stage looked this night - the stage was colorfully designed and decorated like a cantina, with waitresses, and a balcony set up behind the band onstage, lined with lucky revelers sipping...mas tequila! Appropriately, Sammy Hagar and his band - the Waboritas - kicked the set off with "Cabo Wabo" from his Van Halen days. Sammy and his Waboritas proceeded to mix classics from throughout his career with new material from the Red Voodoo album, as the revelers behind the band and the entire arena partied along...Sammy & co. did "Three Lock Box" straight into "There's Only One Way To Rock" and "I'll Fall In Love Again." Sammy, as emcee of this bash, then addressed the audience, recalling past shows at the I.C. Light Amphitheater ("I remember this f\$%king place!"), and then making a few interesting remarks about WDVE midday femme Michele Michaels. Then Sammy recalled his recent Van Halen past, performing "Top of the World" and "Poundcake." He then did a song off Red Voodoo (I believe "Revival;" I was still getting familiar with this album at the time of this concert), before dipping deep into his career past to do an old Montrose number, "Rock Candy." Another song off Red Voodoo, and then it was "Heavy Metal." After some more banter with the audience, during which Sammy complained about the waitresses having too many clothes on, he did a solo keyboard-and-voice rendition of another Sammy-era Van Halen classic, "Right Now." Sammy Hagar then displayed his mixology talents, instructing the I.C. Light crowd on the proper procedure for creating his signature drink, the Waborita. He further complained to his assisting waitress about not having the proper ingredients, and STILL having too many clothes on. She finally addressed the second concern while leaving the stage, giving the male populace of the arena two big well-rounded reasons to cheer wildly. It was then back to Sammy's Van Halen songbook for an acoustic treatment of "Finish What Ya Started" (while we male fans wished that the waitress would come back out and finish what SHE started - yeahhh!) Sammy then dipped back to his last album, Marching To Mars, for "Little White Lies," before breaking out the song everybody in the house this night had been waiting for..."Mas Tequila!" Another Van Hagar classic followed, "Why Can't This Be Love," before Sammy and his Waboritas did the title song from the Red Voodoo album. Here Sammy allowed his band to shine, with his drummer blasting forth a hot solo, and his guitarist, Victor Johnson, joining the celebrants in the balcony. And Sammy himself pulled out a hot guitar solo here as well. The set then drew to a close with one more hot Sammy hit, "I Can't Drive 55."

As wild and festive as Sammy's partying set had just been, there was no way this Pittsburgh crowd was letting Sammy leave the 'Burgh that easily...the cheers erupted and escalated in volume, and Sammy - not really wanting the party to end at this point either - returned with the Waboritas to give the crowd a little more. A marching rhythm slowly emerged from the crowd din, signifying the title song to Sammy's Marching to Mars album. This song slowly built into its full-band crescendo, before Sammy and company segued into the final song of the night, the current hit single from Red Voodoo, "Right On Right." As on the album, this song played live developed into a full-fledged rocker, including full trade-off jamming between the members of the Waboritas as the tune stormed to its close.

For a show I didn't decide to attend until nearly the last minute, I was VERY glad to attend this one (Thanks again Mel for the tix!) – Sammy Hagar, whether you love him or hate him in light of the Van Halen soap opera, delivers ONE HELLUVA PARTY! And as he showed on the Red Voodoo album, he and his Waboritas have solidified more as a unit and as a music-creating entity...This show flowed along nicely, balancing between Sammy favorites and new material. And the new songs more than held their own in the live setting. Make no mistake about it...The Red Rocker lives again! This show was fun, it was exciting, and it was Sammy! As lead singer, guitarist, host and party emcee, Sammy was a PERSONALITY onstage, making everybody feel at home and feel like part of the festivities. You could sense the man was happy to be there. Perhaps leaving the confines of Van Halen was the best thing to happen to Sammy Hagar's career, because he has obviously reinvented himself with his two post-Halen albums and his live show. In the wake of the much-publicized split from Van Halen, it is steadily becoming more apparent that Van Halen needed Sammy Hagar more than Sammy needed Van Halen.

Out of all the concerts I had seen this past summer, this has to rank near the top of the list. More than any other concert I saw this summer, Sammy Hagar's was both concert and PARTY! We left this one feeling good, and knowing that we had experienced much more than just a rehashing of songs live onstage. Sammy Hagar and the Waboritas made this concert an event above and beyond the usual norm. If you didn't get to check out this show over the past year, kick yourself hard, because this was indeed one of the year's best!

THUNDER ON THE MOUNTAIN

(the Cresson concerts revisited)

OZONE RANGERS/LODGE LIZZARDS/THE HURRICANES/HALESTORM/FLIGHT 19/STILL HOLDIN' @ Q94/CRESSON SPORTSMEN'S "CLASSIC Q-FEST," CRESSON SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, CRESSON, PA 8/8/99

For the live local music fan, August means several things. Two of those things are the two concerts that take place at the Cresson Sportsmen's Club every August, Q94's Homegrown Rock Concert and the End Of Summer Jam Benefit for Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

Last year presented a crossroads for both shows, especially the Q94 concert. Heading into last year's concert, Q94 had, 11 months prior, changed its format from modern rock to classic rock. The question going in was whether the station's new classic rock listenership would still support a concert event like this. The answer to that question was mixed...People attended the concert, yes, but attendance was still the lowest it had been for this concert. And it was concluded that Q94's classic rock listenership was largely not interested in bands doing modern rock tunes from Korn, Smashing Pumpkins, Green Day and the like. And the show's reputation for moshpit-induced fights and underage drinking caught up with it last year as well, as folks avoiding the fight possibilities stayed away, and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and Pennsylvania State Police attended and kept vigil outside the gates, poised to nab underage drinkers. The same situation happened for the End of

Summer Jam benefit last year, although the 1998 attendance for that show was still good.

The Cresson concerts faced an uncertain future heading into 1999. Would Q94's current ownership/management choose to subsidize a homegrown rock concert this year, given the dwindling attendance figures from last year and the underage drinking and fighting problems? When the question was put on the table in late spring, Q94 and the Cresson Sportsmen decided that yes, they did want to put on the concert this year, but there would be several significant changes. First of all, given the station's strictly classic rock format, the concert would be a strictly classic rock event, featuring bands specializing in classic rock. The show would be dubbed a new name: "Classic Q-Fest." And to address the underage drinking issue, the Cresson Sportsmen would expand upon what had worked last year at the End Of Summer Jam - a bracelet system, combined with carding at the gate for anybody wanting to either drink alcohol or bring it on the Cresson Sportsmen's Club grounds.

Those issues addressed, the bands and sound company were booked, and the concert was a go. But as Sunday the 8th approached, Mother Nature threatened not to cooperate. And on the morning of the concert, the skies were overcast, and rain was falling in the Altoona and Johnstown areas. Though the forecast was for sunshine later in the day, the damage was done. It was estimated that the weather scared off many from attending. But the show did go on, and for the estimated 250 who attended, it was an excellent time.

First the Q94 and Cresson Sportsmen staff showed up, followed soon after by the sound company, Shockwave Productions, and the Still Holdin' entourage. The Halestorm contingent showed up fairly early as well, accompanied by PA Musician "Hard Rox" columnist Shel Hoachlander and boyfriend Troy Logan. "Jerry's Kids" from Coburn arrived and set up their tent, and a few other early revelers and Saturday night survivors began to arrive as the show's start time approached.

After technical problems delayed the concert's start, Still Holdin' kicked off the day's music, setting the tone for the afternoon right off the bat with their opener "Let The Good Times Roll." It was obvious from the get-go that singer/guitarist Jeremy Nelson, singer/bassist Kelly Montgomery, rhythm guitarist Todd Holes, drummer Jody Riggelman, and special guest tambourine/percussion man Terrence were all happy to be on stage and taking part in the event. The group continued with Black Sabbath's "Fairies Wear Boots," and mixed classic rock from Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Santana, Neil Young and more. Still Holdin' also did one original song this set, the funky "Dark Coffee." Jeremy and Kelly both did good jobs on their respective lead vocal duties throughout the set.

Among the many positive things I came away with from Classic Q-Fest, one of the biggest was the cooperation between bands. Of all the bands on the bill, no egos or attitudes - everyone got along well, helping each other set up equipment, or complimenting each other on a performance well done. And in the middle of a lot of the early camaraderie was HaleStorm, as father/bassist Roger offered a helping hand from the get-go, while young drummer Arejay Hale asked the other bands' drummers about their gear, and wished them all good sets during their performances. The mutual cooperation between bands and musicians added to the overall good vibe that continued to emerge as the day progressed.

Soon, it was Flight 19's turn onstage. One of the hopeful new band collaborations to emerge on the Altoona music scene in recent months, Flight 19 is the latest band project featuring local guitar legend John McKelvey, along with former Sidewalk Romeo bassist Scott Imler. These guys charged out the gate from the get-go with high-powered classic rock, kicking off with Sammy Hagar's "There's Only One Way To Rock," and segueing into Van Halen's "Running with the Devil." Singer Brian Thomas, John and Scott on guitars, bassist Jim Phillips and drummer Darrin Hand were all visibly excited to be on the stage this afternoon, and the adrenaline surged quickly as Flight 19 got further into their set. Scott sang lead vocals on the Doobie Bros.' "Long Train Runnin,'" and the group continued through songs from Scorpions, Grand Funk, and Jimi Hendrix' "Fire," sung by John. Brian then referenced Q94's nightly "Lost Classic" feature by introducing Slade's "Run Runaway," campaigning on that song's behalf as a possible "lost classic." Scott then vented some high-flying lead voice on Heart's "Barracuda" (an effort not lost on HaleStorm singer Liz Hale, as we would later learn), and the group stormed their set to a close with Boston's "Piece Of Mind," Queen's "Tie Your Mother Down" and AC/DC's "Walk All Over You." For Flight 19, this was a strong set that made the statement that they had arrived on this area's music scene. The band was enthusiastic, charged and energized by the show and the atmosphere. Applause was steadier for the group as the set progressed, and by set's end, Flight 19 had clearly won what crowd there was over. Flight 19 nicely stepped up the energy level and atmosphere of Classic Q-Fest, setting the stage for the acts to follow.

While Flight 19 was playing, HaleStorm was preparing for their performance, assembling 12-year-old Arejay Hale's rotating drum kit behind Flight 19 onstage. With HaleStorm on the cover of the August issue of [PA Musician](#) magazine, there was a lot of interest from both fellow musicians and music fans alike about this unique band family from Bethel, PA. And as HaleStorm's start time onstage approached, interested observers slowly moved closer to the stage area to get a look at this band, and that unique drum kit sitting at the rear of the stage.

Soon HaleStorm was set and ready to go, and with their introduction the group quickly commenced with a new original tune, "Psycho." As both Still Holdin' and Flight 19 before them were both guitar-driven bands, HaleStorm's dual-keyboard sound was a departure and something different for Cresson concerts in general. Elizabeth Hale welcomed the audience, and introduced the various members of her band - dad Roger Hale on bass, Arejay on drums, and an additional Hale on stage this afternoon - Roger's brother, Glenn Hale, visiting from California, who staffed the second keyboard on the left side of the stage. Liz then introduced another new tune, a tender key ballad called "Over Me." Out of this ballad, Arejay cut loose with a feisty drum solo to the increasing cheers of the captivated Cresson crowd. Elizabeth then addressed the crowd again, thanking Q94 for inviting them to this show. She then complimented the band just before HaleStorm, Flight 19, heaping major praise upon Scott Imler for his high-flying vocal display on "Barracuda." All the while Liz was talking, Arejay was being strapped into position aboard his special drum kit, leading to the moment I had been waiting for, and the moment much of the crowd had moved forward to see - Liz introduced the title song to the group's album, "Time Man." During the tick-tock opening sequence to the song, both Liz and Roger choreographed the hands on a clock, and soon the song was under way. Once the chorus kicked in, Arejay was on his merry way, rotating upside down in unison to the music, with the Cresson audience cheering him on. Added tip of the ballcap to soundman Jim Dickson of Shockwave Productions, who gave Elizabeth's voice the perfect reverb touch during her solo voice part during the song's climax. Out of this,

Liz led the group on HaleStorm's audience-participation number, "No Clue," enticing at least a few of the onlookers to shout along with the choruses. HaleStorm then concluded their half-hour set with another new song, "Emotional Release." HaleStorm's set was short but action-packed, and had the desired effect on the assembled crowd. HaleStorm met many new friends and fans, and sold a record number of copies of their Don't Mess with the Time Man CD for one show. Speaking with the band later on, the HaleStorm entourage told me they very much like this part of the state, and are anxious to come up this way again both to visit the area and perform.

As mentioned before, camaraderie between bands and musicians was a very welcome highlight of this year's Classic Q-Fest. One shining example of this was a dialogue I witnessed between Arejay Hale and the Hurricanes prior to the start of the 'Canes' set...

AREJAY (to Felix Kos): *"I hear you are a very good guitarist."*

FELIX KOS: *"I hear you are a very good drummer."*

AREJAY (shaking Felix' hand): *"I just want to wish you good luck and hope you have a good show."*

FELIX: *"Well Thank you!"... (then, as Arejay leaves the stage, Felix turns to his other Hurricane bandmates) ... "Now THAT'S a PROFESSIONAL!"*

It was then the Hurricanes' turn...and they made it count, delivering a smoking set of Southern rock, classic rock and blues. Felix, bassist Billy Nusom, drummer Bob Watters and special guest keyboard man/trumpet player Jeff Morgan erupted for a dazzling set, brimming with the expected hot musicianship. You could tell Felix was on his game as he heated up the fretboards during the Allman Brothers' "Blue Skys," the original "Start It Up" and Stevie Ray Vaughan's "The Sky Is Crying." Jeff Morgan was also showing some fiery displays on trumpet early on, and Bob and Billy were dishing out spirited rhythms with their respective instruments. Answering audience calls for Lynyrd Skynyrd, the 'Canes broke out "I Know A Little," and followed it with Pat Travers' "Snortin' Whiskey," before commencing an Allman Brothers medley featuring "Where It All Began" into "Jessica." This succession of songs brought the largest number of dancers thus far to the grassy stagefront area. Felix and co. saved the best for last, though – ending their set with a powerful version of the Outlaws' "Green Grass and High Tides," dedicated in memory of the late Don Ruzzi. Felix's guitarwork here was just plain INCREDIBLE, leaving mouths wide open in amazement. The Hurricanes always seem to step it up a notch for the Cresson Sportsmen's shows, and this was no exception. All four 'Canes were playing for keeps this afternoon, and their performance raised the bar even higher for the remaining acts to follow.

That fact was not lost on the day's next group, the Lodge Lizzards, as Lizzards bassist Jim Colyer quickly acknowledged that his band already had four tough acts to follow this day. But the Lodge Lizzards had one big plus going for them that the other bands thus far did not have – the sun had finally broken through the cloud cover convincingly as the Lizzards took the stage, and dance-happy fans quickly took advantage of this by populating the grassy stagefront area for the Lizzards' set. Jim, guitarists/lead singer Eric Kelly, guitarist/singer Don DeSantis and drummer Rick

Wagner commenced with Joe Cocker's "Feelin' Alright," and proceeded with their set of classic rock favorites with a few original numbers thrown in. The Lodge Lizzards heated up the stage with tunes from Dire Straits, Tom Petty, CCR and more, plus original songs like "Where Is The Life," "Sun Will Shine" and "Letter To Michelle." This was probably the best I had seen from this band yet; the instrumentation was tight, while Eric's lions' share of the vocals displayed a convincing seasoned gravelly texture. While the Lizzards rode one big adrenalin surge for the set's duration, the peak of their set had to be their medley of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" into Warren Zevon's "Werewolves of London," which generated the heaviest dance participation of the day thus far. This show had indeed progressed into party mode.

The arrival of Mr. Sun was somewhat short-lived, as it began to set behind the Cresson hillside as the Lodge Lizzards finished and the day's final band, the Ozone Rangers, prepared to take the stage. The Ozone Rangers were a crucial part of the first Q94/Cresson Sportsmen's Homegrown Rock Concert after former Q94 owner Ed Sherlock decided to restart the concerts in 1995. The Ozone Rangers were pivotal in getting people dancing and having a good time, setting the stage for Badwrench's unforgettable set that year. Now, four years later, the Ozone Rangers were headlining the event. The group had been somewhat semi-retired, due to singer/guitarist Bob Muhlbauer's health. And Bob was hesitant to even accept the invite to do this show, citing travel distance and the group's rustiness from not performing on a regular basis. But Bob did accept, and contacted his former bassist, Bill Nusom, about sitting in with the group. After some thought, Bill accepted the offer, and prior to the show, the two decided they were going to reprise their legendary Ozone Rangers ZZ Top tribute, complete with beards. So like all the other acts prior to them this day, the Ozone Rangers too were stepping it up for their set.

Bob, Billy and drummer Sam Timchak warmed up the Cresson audience with several Southern and classic rock numbers from the Allman Brothers, Rolling Stones, and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Quickly, dancers populated the stagefront grassy area, and the Ozone Rangers' party set was under way. Bob greeted the crowd and welcomed them to this family event, joking that many families got started right here at the Cresson Sportsmen's Club. After Bob chatted it up with the crowd for a few moments, Billy resurfaced, now with some new facial growth...we were ready for the ZZ Top portion of the show. Bob joked that he told Billy not to take those hormone pills, and the Ozone Rangers commenced a block of ZZ Top with "Gimme All Your Lovin'." Bob and Billy started doing their little choreographed ZZ dance step thing onstage, and the group segued through several more ZZ Top numbers – "Sharp Dressed Man," "Tush," "I Thank You," "A Fool For Your Stockings" and "La Grange." With the party now going full-throttle, the Ozone Rangers geared it up even further, with Bob introducing their "classic rock medley from hell." The group strung together just about every song they could think of in the key of 'e' for a good 20-25 minutes, including tunes from AC/DC, Jethro Tull, Metallica, Judas Priest, Robert Palmer, Black Sabbath, Alice In Chains, Elvis, War and much more. As the medley progressed, stagefront partiers began to climb onstage and dance alongside the band. In past years of this event, this would have been a prelude to stagediving, bodysurfing and moshpits, but this year, it was just good natured dancing and celebrating, never threatening to get out of hand. Eventually the medley – and the show – wound down with Steppenwolf's "Born to be Wild." This reunited Ozone Rangers line-up sounded pretty good for their first time together onstage in a while. Bob, Bill and Sam sounded tight and together, and wasted little time getting down and having fun like they used to. Bob was the entertainer, making the crowd feel at home, and showing he still could play guitar, complete with beer bottle slidework

along the way. The Ozone Rangers provided a fitting end to the day, and Classic Q-Fest ended on a good vibe.

While weather stunted the audience attendance this year, Classic Q-Fest otherwise was a big success. The bands were all great, and the crowd was receptive and very well behaved. There were NO fights, and the closest thing to a problem at the event was an overexhuberant Harley rider who took his machine into the middle of the stagefront dance crowd during the Ozone Rangers' set; he was politely advised to move his cycle out of the stagefront area. The show started a little late due to technical problems, but once started, the show ran smoothly. Shockwave Productions did a decent job overall, despite a few minor power outages along the way. For the dawning of a new era for this show, the 1999 Classic Q-Fest was a good beginning, and the future of the concert in this format looks hopeful.

**NOT THEM GUYS/POT LUCK/SMOKIN'
J'S/DESPERADOES/DELIRIUM/NATIVE SONS @ 9TH END OF SUMMER JAM,
CRESSON SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, CRESSON, PA 8/29/99**

What began as a casual jam get-together by several musicians and friends nine years ago has evolved over the years to become one of the most anticipated events of summer. The 9th annual End Of Summer Jam benefit concert for Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh was happening again at the Cresson Sportsmen's Club.

Unlike the "Classic Q-Fest" held three weeks earlier, a near-perfect day weather-wise awaited the proceedings at the Cresson Sportsmen's Club this day. But like "Classic Q-Fest," attendance was light despite the weather. And the reason was simple - Rock station QWK-Rock was holding their annual welcome-back party for the incoming Penn State students this same day. The QWK "Rocks The Block" Party, featuring national acts Jimmie's Chicken Shack, Caroline's Spine and Pushmonkey; and regional powerhouses Wrench and Emily's Toybox, was happening in downtown State College. And unlike "End Of Summer Jam," admission to this show was free.

So needless to say, though attendance was light, those who did attend End Of Summer Jam obviously wanted to be there to support the cause - money and admission at the gate was not an issue. And while not a huge crowd by any means, it was still a crowd, and a receptive one who politely cheered each band's efforts through the course of this 12-hour event.

In past years, I would arrive at the Cresson Sportsmen's grounds well in advance of the scheduled 12 noon start, but the show would usually never get under way until 1 PM, due either to problems setting up the sound, or because everyone wanted to wait for crowd to arrive before having the first band perform. Strangely enough, I was running a little late this year, arriving at the Cresson Sportsmen's just before 12 noon, the scheduled start time. You guessed it - Harlan Cox had his sound system ready to go, and show openers Native Sons were just about ready to go. I would now have to rush to set up my camcorder gear! Go figure!

Fortunately, despite being ready to go at 12 noon, it was decided to start the show after 12:30 to allow more earlybirds to arrive and give Native Sons at least a little bit of a crowd to play to. "Jerry's Kids" from Coburn had their tent set up, and the Delirium, Pot Luck and Smokin' J's contingents arrived early to partake in some of the earlier bands on the bill.

Soon, the opening band was introduced, and Native Sons commenced their set before the light but slowly-building crowd. With their lighter brand of keyboard-driven pop, rock, blues and standards, Native Sons was a natural choice to open the show, as they provided a low-key, relaxed opening suitable for a charity concert such as this. Singer/keyboard man Mark Rossi, percussionist Blase Michaels and trumpet player Jeff Morgan gently brought the assembled revelers into the spirit of the event with tunes from Dave Matthews, Jimmy Buffett, Billy Joel, Chris Rea, Van Morrison, Elton John and more. As always, Mark's keyboard work dazzled, and Jeff's brass flavorings added another dimension to the sound. Highlights for me included Mark's humorous take on Jimmy Buffett's "Bank of Bad Habits," the trio's feisty version of Dr. John's "Right Place Wrong Time," and the group's warm version of Bruce Hornsby's "The Way It Is," which closed the set. As we've come to expect, Native Sons lifted the show gently off the ground, and nicely started the day's festivities with their flavorful set of sounds.

More revelers arrived during the first intermission between performers – including a group of fans decked out in their best psychedelic 60's attire, who set up shop on the lawn and began blowing bubbles. This bubble-blowing brigade turned out being one of the most memorable things about this year's End Of Summer Jam, and their bubbles – carried on an active and steady wind throughout the afternoon, contributed to the personality of this year's concert.

Soon the second band of the day was set to go – Delirium. As we would find out towards the end of their performance, this was to be Delirium's final show, as bassist Eric Biter was relocating to North Carolina, and the rest of the group was deciding to call it a day. Delirium made their swan song count – Eric, singer Scott Walk, guitarists Dave Luther and Brett O'Donnell, and drummer Ron Penvose were firing on all cylinders on their hard-hitting set of current and classic rock covers. Starting with Black Sabbath's "N.I.B.," Delirium fired off tunes from Creed, Led Zeppelin, Live, Lenny Kravitz, Aerosmith, Monster Magnet and more; before closing with Tool's "Sober" and Godsmack's "Whatever." By the time Delirium got to Aerosmith's "Sweet Emotion" midway through their near-hour set, a handful of fans were up and dancing on the stagefront lawn. Delirium sounded consistent and on-target through most of their set, and their swan song set gave a strong final reminder of what this group was about through their 3-4-year career.

The bubbles continued to fly with the wind during the next intermission as well, and though more people were continuing to arrive, it was becoming apparent that attendance was down this year. Still, organizer Mickey Luckenbaugh was hopeful that more folks would come in later on for some of the later bands on the bill.

Long-time End Of Summer Jam veterans the Desperadoes were next. I had last seen the Desperadoes perform almost a month ago prior – at my 20-year high school reunion! (Yes, I admit it, I am old!) As I introduced them, I asked them, "Didn't I just see you guys at my high school reunion?" To which singer/guitarist Mark Middleton replied, "Yes, it was your FIFTH, Jim!" After opening with a pair of Neil Young tunes, "Old Man" and "Cinnamon Girl;" an instrumental and Robin Trower's "Bridge of Sighs," the trio – Mark Middleton, bassist Mike Suppes and drummer Harold Knapenberger – began taking requests from the crowd. The Desperadoes proceeded to do songs from Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Foghat, Black Sabbath, Ted Nugent and others. While the overall mood was laid back and relaxed, the Desperadoes were business once each song began, with Mark Middleton scorching off

hot leads on the guitar, and all three members playing tightly like a well-oiled machine. Another good showing from these reliable Johnstown rockers, who have come to be one of the expected highlights of each year's End Of Summer Jam.

Next up was the End Of Summer Jam debut of Smokin' J's. Having never seen this Phillipsburg/Hastings/Patton--based outfit, I was curious about what musical goods this group would bring to the table. As it turns out, they brought a lot! Singer/percussionist Jamie Dubetsky (ex-Soul Kitchen), guitarist/percussionist/singer Joe Konior, singer/bassist John Baker and drummer Angelo Pompa – all four seasoned vets of area stages – all pool their talents in a band project that fuses rock, funk, folk, country, blues, reggae and worldbeat into a lively, unpredictable show. I knew things would be interesting here when, on their first song, Joe brandished a mandolin! Smokin' J's mixed originals and cover material; the originals were light and funky, with an emphasis on percussion. Smokin' J's cover material was varied and diverse – Rusted Root's "Send Me On My Way" (which got the bubble-blowing hippie brigade dancing at stagefront), Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer," country staple "Rocky Top," Violent Femmes' "Blister In The Sun," and Bob Marley's "Smoke Two Joints," to name a few. An added highlight during Smokin' J's was their special guest, Sherry Lender. As John's girlfriend, Sherry is a regular guest at John's weekly Sunday night acoustic gig at Electric Avenue in Houtzdale. She has an awesome voice, and harmonizes very nicely with John. During Smokin' J's set, Sherry did an awesome job singing several songs at mid-set; Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon," Indigo Girls' "Closer To Fine," and Jewel's "You Were Meant For Me." John also took the opportunity to perform a song from his newly-released solo CD, VaVa Demo – the local-flavored "River Road" (based on a skinny-dipping experience along River Road in Patton). Needless to say, I was very impressed and pleasantly surprised by the talent and variety Smokin' J's brought to the stage this day, and I highly recommend checking this band out when they play area stages.

Night was now starting to fall upon the Cresson Sportsmen's Club, and being this was late August, the first hint of cooler fall temperatures arrived with darkness. I was soon regretting my decision to wear just a muscle shirt and shorts! And with the cooler temperatures descending upon the Cresson environs, the annual End Of Summer Jam bonfire drew much of the remaining crowd around it to stay warm.

Next up onstage was another new band I had not seen officially yet, Pot Luck. At least initially, Pot Luck picked their name hastily as their line-up changed from show to show – a.k.a. a "pot luck" line-up. But this night, the key components of this new and upcoming band were in place – Pittsburgh blues growler/guitarist Bobby Lee, rhythm guitarist Jim Ricotta (a.k.a. "Big Jim"), stand-in bassist Bill Nusom (of Hurricanes/Ozone Rangers fame), and veteran drummer/End Of Summer Jam organizer Mickey Luckenbaugh. Pot Luck played a powerful set of southern/classic rock and blues, highlighted by tight musicianship and Bobby's strong bluesy growl. Pot Luck opened with a pair of Allman Brothers tunes, "Dreams I'll Never See" and "One Way Out," and continued with the Doobie Brothers' "Listen to the Music." Bobby belted out bluesy vox on "Mustang Sally" and B.B. King's "The Thrill Is Gone," and the group played tunes from Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eddie Money, ZZ Top's "Tush" (sung by Billy), Lynyrd Skynyrd and Blackfoot. An added highlight was Blackfoot's "Highway Song," which Bobby dedicated in memory of Don "Butch" Ruzzi, an influential local guitar player who lost his battle with cancer two years ago. Pot Luck came together nicely this night, sounding tight on their instruments. Though the

group doesn't play too frequently around the Altoona area, they are worth checking out when you see the name appear on area marquees.

One more band remained on the day's itinerary – Not Them Guys. Two years ago, when Not Them Guys headlined, singer Steve Shiffler challenged me to stagedive during their set. With peer pressure and pride at stake, I relented to Steve's challenge, and did my first stage dive and body-surfing at the show ever! I knew going into this set that Steve was going to demand a repeat performance, and with less crowd present to catch me, I wasn't too keen on the idea. It turned out to be a war of wills – would Steve persuade enough people to stagefront during Not Them Guys' set to convince me to stagedive yet again, or would the late summer night cold keep folks huddled around the bonfire, thus sparing me from having to go airborne again?

Fortunately for me, the cold won out...despite Steve's best attempts to rally the crowd forward, most everyone stayed put around the bonfire, and I didn't have to stage dive. Not Them Guys, as expected, did a decent job on a variety of classic and modern rock covers – opening with a Tom Petty medley, and continuing with tunes from Neil Young, Goo Goo Dolls, R.E.M., Aerosmith, Tonic, Black Crowes, Alice Cooper, Van Halen, Ted Nugent and more. Steve was ever the party animal onstage, rallying what stagefront crowd there was to make noise and get crazy. Behind him, the current Not Them Guys line-up showed this night that they were beginning to fuse together fairly well. Guitarists Mark Davis and Kip Woodring were on fire the whole set, executing heated solos throughout. Bassist D.J. and drummer Jamie Shumac are solidifying into a sturdy rhythm section, based on their tight rhythms through most of this set. While attrition, cold temperatures and Monday morning work schedules took their toll on the remaining crowd, Not Them Guys kept the party going to the advertised midnight finale, and at least a few survivors stuck around to cheer them along the way.

So this year's End Of Summer Jam was a bit of a bittersweet experience. While the weather was nice, and enough folks showed up to make this year's event a good time, not enough people attended to raise much money for Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Show organizer Mickey Luckenbaugh has indicated that a change may be forthcoming next year as far as the date of the concert; moving it to a Saturday is an option, so it doesn't compete head-to-head with QWK-Rock's free block party extravaganza that same day. On the plus side, everybody was again very well-behaved, with no discipline problems or underage drinking problems. It is hoped that organizers of both the End Of Summer Jam and Q94 Classic Q-Fest, and the Cresson Sportsmen, allow the positives of both of this year's concerts to outweigh the negatives, and that these shows will be able to continue next year. Changes are always risky business, and with both shows turning new leaves and cleaning up their acts, it was likely a few folks might drop off the wagon and not attend. But it should be kept in mind that a lot of folks DID attend the concerts, and that those who did attend were well-behaved and there for the right reasons. You build on that. Rest assure, I will do whatever I need to in order to see that both these shows survive next year, because both shows are necessary and important to this area's music fans and scene.

FROM BENEATH THE BAR

Gigging and swigging with D'Scribe

SOULFLY/NEUROSIS/HATEBREED @ CROWBAR, STATE COLLEGE 7/13/99

In between all of my outdoor concerts this past summer, I also managed a few nightclub concerts as well. This was one of the most impressive...Max Cavalera's post-Sepultura project, Soulfly, along with Neurosis and Hatebreed, heating up a hot July night at Crowbar.

Sadly, due to my "day job," I missed Hatebreed altogether, but eyewitness accounts said they were pretty torrid and slamming. I did arrive in time to catch the latter part of Neurosis's set. I am unfamiliar with this band and their music, but what I witnessed this night was impressive. Neurosis drilled intense, slower, grinding metalcore with weighty bass and drums, festering guitar chord mayhem and monstrous, bellowing vocals. Neurosis' presentation was impressive, effectively using video imagery with a projected kaleidoscopic backdrop behind them onstage. Again, I didn't know this band or their music, but judging by their presentation this night, and the number of people who were totally into it, I might have to give Neurosis' CD a closer look and listen.

I ran into a few familiar faces this night; fellow Cut writer Al Slavitsky, and the Beer God entourage, who proved instrumental in helping me get a good vantage point to take a few photos from Crowbar's over-21 section.

Of course, the band I was at Crowbar to see this night was Soulfly. I had missed the band last summer at OzzFest due to Parkway gridlock in Pittsburgh, and after hearing their CD (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) I wasn't missing them this night. From the moment Max Cavalera and Soulfly took the Crowbar stage, it was clearly all offense and take no prisoners! These guys POUNDED! Max, dressed in a soccer jersey and playing a guitar with a Brazilian flag design on it, scorched out the riffage to "Eye For An Eye," the leadoff track to Soulfly's self-titled CD, and it was instant moshpit maelstrom at stagefront, with bodies flying everywhere and several cascading above fans' heads in body-surfing nirvana. Admittedly, I was not familiar enough with Soulfly's CD at this point in time to be able to rattle off the group's entire set this night; but I do know they did "Bumba," "The Song Remains Insane" and "No" with its unmistakable "No f#%king Hootie and the Blowfish" line; along with other numbers from the CD, and several tunes from Max's Sepultura and Nailbomb stints.

While I was unable to provide a complete setlist, I can attest to the devastation wrought onstage...Soulfly was all the intensity I expected to see this night, and then some! The obvious focal point was frontman Max Cavalera, who is clearly one of the most INTENSE performers I have ever seen perform! Max just poured it out from the get-go, never leaving up and rarely taking a breather through the set's course. Max's bandmates were equally lethal – guitarist Jackson Bandeira, bassist Marcello D. Rapp and drummer Roy Mayorga were tenacious and intense, and this band just attacked and attacked their tunes with no regard for life or limb!

Besides several Sepultura tunes and Max Cavalera's unique vocal signature, there was one other carryover from Sepultura that made its mark this night – a tribal percussion jam during the encore that had Crowbar going crazy.

What Soulfly brought to the stage this night was not just intensity, but passion...you can tell this band performs it from the heart 150% - whether it is the fact that this band are self-appointed musical ambassadors for the third world and the plight of indigenous peoples and political prisoners, or if it is just Max venting raw emotion on the heels of his tumultuous split from Sepultura and the loss of several people close in his life; Soulfly doesn't just slam ordinary metallic carnage – they pack pure emotion and passion behind it, and you believe every riff and snarl. Bottom line – if you like your metal HEAVY and showing absolutely NO MERCY, I highly recommend checking out Soulfly should they make it back to this neighborhood any time soon. Soulfly is the real deal, clearly proven at Crowbar this night.

SOUTHERN COMFORT

Words of Wisdom from Dixie submitted by Cut Keeper of the 13 Bottles of Victoria Secrets, Tabitha

TIPS FOR NORTHERNERS MOVING SOUTH...

1. Save all manner of bacon grease. You will be instructed later how to use it.
2. If you forget a Southerner's name, refer to him (or her) as Bubba". You have a 75% chance of being right.
3. Just because you can drive on snow and ice does not mean we can. Stay home the two days of the year it snows.
4. If you do run your car into a ditch, don't panic. Four men in the cab of a four wheel drive with a 12-pack of beer and a tow chain will be along shortly. Don't try to help them. Just stay out of their way. This is what they live for.
5. Don't be surprised to find movie rentals and bait in the same store.
6. Do not buy food at the movie store.
7. If it can't be fried in bacon grease, it ain't worth cooking, let alone eating.
8. Remember: "Y'all" is singular. "All y'all" is plural. "All y'all's" is plural possessive.
9. There is nothing sillier than a Northerner imitating a southern accent, unless it's a southerner imitating a Boston accent.
10. Get used to hearing, "You ain't from around here, are you?"
11. People walk slower here.
12. Don't be worried that you don't understand anyone. They don't understand you either.

13. The first Southern expression to creep into a transplanted Northerner's vocabulary is the adjective "Big ol'", as in "big ol' truck" or "big ol' boy". Eighty-five percent begin their new southern influenced dialect with this expression. One hundred percent are in denial about it.

14. The proper pronunciation you learned in school is no longer proper.

15. Be advised: The "He needed killin'" defense is valid here.

16. If attending a funeral in the South, remember, we stay until the last shovel of dirt is thrown on and the tent is torn down.

17. If you hear a Southerner exclaim, "Hey, y'all, watch this!" stay out of his way. These are likely the last words he will ever say.

18. Most Southerners do not use turn signals, and they ignore those who do. In fact, if you see a signal blinking on a car with a southern license plate, you may rest assured that it was on when the car was purchased.

19. Northerners can be identified by the spit on the inside of their car's windshield that comes from yelling at other drivers.

20. The winter wardrobe you always brought out in September can wait until November.

21. If there is the prediction of the slightest chance of even the most minuscule accumulation of snow, your presence is required at the local grocery store. It does not matter if you need anything from the store, it is just something you're supposed to do.

22. Satellite dishes are very popular in the South. When you purchase one it is to be positioned directly in front of your trailer. This is logical bearing in mind that the dish cost considerably more than the trailer and should, therefore, be displayed.

23. Tornadoes and Southerners going through a divorce have a lot in common. In either case, you know someone is going to lose a trailer.

24. Florida is not considered a southern state. There are far more Yankees than Southerners living there.

25. As you are cursing the person driving 15 mph in a 55 mph zone, directly in the middle of the road, remember, many folks learned to drive on a model of vehicle known as John Deere, and this is the proper speed and lane position for the vehicle.

26. You can ask a Southerner for directions, but unless you already know the positions of key hills, trees and rocks, you're better off trying to find it yourself.

Everything Southern has its spiritual Yankee counterpart. Here's how to tell which is which:

The North has sun-dried too-mah-toes..... The South has 'mater samiches"

The North has coffeehousesThe South has Waffle Houses

The North has MomThe South has Mama

The North has dating servicesThe South has family reunions

The North has switchblade knivesThe South has Lee press-on nails

The North has saving the whales..... The South has getting saved

The North has double last namesThe South has double first names

The North has sensational tabloids..... The South has neighbors

The North has Ted KennedyThe South has Jesse Helms

The North has the Mafia..... The South has NASCAR

Some Big 10 Humor for Everyone's Tailgate...

(submitted by Farley Featherfoot)

Q: How do you get a Michigan grad off of your front porch?

A: Pay him for the pizza.

Q: What's the difference between an Ohio State female student and an elephant?

A: About 50 pounds.

Q: How do you make up the difference?

A: Force feed the elephant.

Q: What is the difference between Michigan and Frosted Flakes?

A: Frosted Flakes know what to do in a Bowl.

How many Big 10 students does it take to change a lightbulb? Well ...

*At Ohio State it takes only 100. One to change it, and 49 to say how they do it better than Penn St. and 50 who realize it's all a lie.

- * At Michigan it takes five. One to change the bulb, two to talk about how Bo would have done it, and two more to explain how they did it every bit as well as any Ivy Leaguer.
- * At Northwestern it takes three. One to change the bulb, and two to phone a friend at Ohio State to get instructions.
- * At Michigan State it takes four. One to screw in the bulb, and three to figure out how to get high off the old one.
- * At Wisconsin it takes six. One to change it, two to mix the drinks, and three to find the perfect J. Crew outfit to wear for the occasion.
- * At Illinois it takes seven, and each one gets four semester credit hours for it.
- * At Indiana it takes eight. One to screw it in, and seven to discuss how much brighter it shines during basketball season.
- * At Minnesota it takes ten. Two to figure out how to screw it in, and eight to find an ugly enough lampshade to match their school colors.
- * At Penn State it takes 2. One to change it, 1 to throw the old bulb at Michigan students.
- * At Purdue, it takes 12. One to change the bulb, five to take pictures, four fraternity pledges to get naked and run through the fountain screaming "They changed the Bulb!", and two engineers to run a study on the whole thing.
- * At Iowa it takes none. There's no electricity in Iowa.

Q: What is long and hard on a Michigan fan?

A: First Grade.

Q: What is the only sign of intelligent life in Michigan?

A: The freeway sign that says "University Park, 314 miles".

CUT COMMENTARY

By D'Scribe

I recently attended my 20th high school reunion (Altoona Area High School Class of 1979; yes, I'm old). It was okay, I guess. These days, though, I find I have a lot more in common with people who graduated in 1989 than I do with my old classmates from 1979. Most of them have gone on to marry and have families, have taken on careers or operate their own businesses, and have followed their own

callings in life. As I have. But being involved in radio, music and media, still single, and hanging out pretty much with a younger crowd these days, I found my interests a lot different from most of my classmates.' I suppose the years do that to lots of friendships and associations.

I saw a few of my old friends from high school through the course of reunion weekend, and reminisced memories with them. But a lot of my cronies from high school passed on attending this reunion, and a lot of the people who showed up were acquaintances who I never really hung out with in high school to begin with, so we didn't have much to talk about at the reunion. It seemed that just as in high school, the social division lines still existed at the reunion...athletes hung out with other athletes, cheerleaders with other cheerleaders, the upper crust of the class with other upper crust, and the common folks with each other.

That aspect of the reunion got me thinking about...the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado a few months back. I had written a commentary about that situation which was supposed to be in our last issue of the Cut, but it somehow disappeared in the vast cyber wasteland of my computer. The bulk of my commentary focused on how I felt that part of the responsibility for the killings had to go back to the school officials, peers and parents of the killers for not recognizing the potential powderkeg that existed prior to the massacre. On the parental front, how could the two killers' parents not sense something was amiss when they saw sawed-off shotguns and assault weapons in their kids' possessions, or directions on making pipe bombs on their kids' computers? And the killers' classmates and school officials turned their backs and ignored such warning signs as the killers' memberships in the outcast "Trenchcoat Mafia," and the apparent taunting and teasing of these youths by other "castes" in the school.

Recently in the Altoona area, there was heated debate about instituting a dress code in the Altoona Area School District. Proponents of the dress code argued that such a code would help equalize classrooms and blur the dividing lines between rich and poor students, the "haves" and "have nots," making for a healthier social and learning environment in the schools. Opponents argued that dress codes infringed on kids' freedom of expression, and that stiff uniforms or outfits would make some kids uncomfortable in class, interfering with the learning experience. I tended to side with the opponents of the code myself, as I felt that a kid who felt comfortable in class was more likely to pay attention and learn than a kid in a scratchy outfit, who would be fidgety and irritable. But I see the point of the dress code advocates, and especially in light of the recent Columbine massacre, they have a strong argument in favor of a dress code.

But a dress code alone does not eliminate the inherent "caste" system that has always existed in classrooms. There have always been social dividing lines in the classroom. Athletes hang out with athletes, not with the fat kids. Cheerleaders hang out with athletes and other cheerleaders, not with the plain jane girls or commoners. And there are always the students or individuals who are deemed outcasts, who are not included in the classroom cliques or "in-crowds." They are not invited to the parties, or are made fun of because their parents are unemployed, or because they are fat, or their sneakers are not expensive Nikes, or they aren't straight-A students, etc. Some of these rejected kids start hanging out together. Perhaps they get involved with drugs. Perhaps they build a hatred for the cliques of students who

rejected them. Perhaps, unmonitored, they start fantasizing about revenge or getting back at those who oppressed them. And stuff like Columbine occurs.

Society and the news media can point fingers to a variety of scapegoats to blame for what happened at Columbine; the movie Matrix and Marilyn Manson, to name a few. But I think anytime you have a situation where one group of people looks down at, taunts, or oppresses another group of people – even as seemingly insignificant as in a classroom scenario – tensions rise, resentment builds, and in the case of troubled youths finding solace and companionship with each other in the form of the "Trenchcoat Mafia," Columbine occurs. Parents, teachers, school officials and other students need to be aware of what is happening in the classroom. If there are tensions or differences between students or groups of students, work them out. Communicate. Make everyone feel like a valuable member of the classroom or group. Work to eliminate the "caste" system in the classroom..and in a larger overview, society in general. Parents need to be parents and pay attention to their kids. School officials and teachers need to be aware of potential problems, playground or gym class fights, etc. As long as cliques and castes exist in the classroom, and people ignore such situations, tragedies such as Columbine will continue to be a possible result.

CONNOISSEUR CUT

Pillaging D'Scribe's Album Collection

MORE – BLOOD & THUNDER (Atlantic, 1982) Interspersed throughout my album collection (as, I imagine, everybody's collection) are many rock and roll success stories – albums by bands and artists who "made it," and many by those who didn't. Some of my favorite albums of all time are by groups and artists most of you have never heard of, who chased the dream of success in the music business, but never quite saw the fruits of their efforts. This is one such story...

Let's backtrack to spring of 1982. I was living in state college, finishing my junior year at Penn State University. I remember the day I bought this album. I had walked into City Lights (along with Arboria, the best record store in State College). It was Tuesday, new release day. On the front display were the new artists, and I remember what was on display...There was an album called Too Fast For Love by a wild and crazy-looking new band called "Motley Crue." There was a self-titled album by a new band called Fortnox (a prospective future subject of "Connoisseur Cut"). There was also the self-titled debut album by former motorhead guitarist "Fast" Eddie Clarke's new band, Fastway. And there was this album, Blood & Thunder, by a band I never heard of called More. I would eventually own all four of these albums; but this day, for some reason, I wanted More. So I bought More.

From England, More was a "stiff" as bands go, but I love this album. Heavy for its time period, uncompromising, good tunes, tough-sounding. It's all there, warts, belches and all. Their second stateside release following the good but not-particularly-memorable 1981 debut album Warhead, Blood & Thunder for me was killer! More's base sound was driving, powerful heavy metal of the judas priest/black sabbath vein. More's new singer on this album, Mick Stratton, sounded like a perfect cross-section of Ozzy Osbourne and Robert Plant – High vocal range, powerful, yet raspy and raw. Bassist Brian Day and drummer Andy John Burton packed meaty,

forceful rhythms, while guitarist Kenny Cox had a field day throughout the album, drilling everything from raunch-rock chords to over-the-top distortion and feedback displays and more. Blood & Thunder sounded HUNGRY!!! Side One was particularly killer, opening with the charging fast-paced rocker "Killer on the Prowl," displaying wickedly captivating riffage and Mick's high-flying vocal barrage – one of the best album-opening tracks in my book, 'nuff said! Then the savage title song, "Blood and Thunder" – Lethal from the start, the intro features Kenny Cox playing with various feedback and distortion effects on his axe, before the tune kicks into its rampaging, tenacious melody and equally killer chorus...this tune still ranks as one of my personal favorites of all time! Next up, another powerful rocker, "I Just Can't Believe It," again with a captivating melody and savage-sounding musicianship to carry it. "I've Been Waiting" was midtempo carnage, carrying us to the aggressive and powerful "Traitor's Gate" and halftime (remember, this is a vinyl album, with sides 1 & 2). Side Two stayed more midtempo and raunch-rock- sounding on the tunes "Rock and Roll," "I Wanna Take You," "Go Home" and "Nightmare." Side Two's big highlight was the instrumental "The Eye;" this tune was a lethal headphone tune, with Kenny Cox's hypnotic lead riff resonating back and forth between left and right speaker – WAY COOL!

At least for me, Blood & Thunder was a lethal disc which spent many, many hours on my stereo turntable, and even now still sounds good. Why didn't these guys make it? It's hard to say...they weren't the sleekest and photogenic band around, and thus weren't teen pin-up magazine cover favorites like the aforementioned Motley Crue or Def Leppard. Thus, the rather rough-looking album cover picture of lead axe Kenny Cox's grill holding guitar in hand probably didn't sell a lot of albums. And Atlantic Records was never notorious for getting behind and promoting their new bands at that time, either. More didn't have promotional push, or the benefits of massive MTV or radio exposure to help them along, so they just didn't happen and were eventually dropped from Atlantic. But Blood & Thunder remains an excellent album well worth checking out if you spot it at a flea market or yard sale. As with many other excellent bands that didn't "make it," More gets some posthumous respect here in the Cut.

RATING

9.6/10.0

WE GET LETTERS

Dear Tech Support,

Subject: Software Problems

Last year I upgraded from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0, and noticed that the new program began unexpected child processing that took up a lot of space and valuable resources. (No mention of this phenomenon was included in the product brochure.)

In addition, Wife 1.0 installs itself into all other programs and launches during system initialization, where it monitors all other system activity. Applications such as Pokernight 10.3, Drunken Boys Night 2.5 and Saturday Football 5.0 no longer run, crashing the system whenever selected. I cannot seem to keep Wife 1.0 in the background while attempting to run some of my other favorite applications. I am thinking about going back to Girlfriend 7.0, but the uninstall does not work on this program. Can you help me, please!!!???

Thanks, Joe

Dear Joe:

This is a very common problem men complain about. It is mostly due to a primary misconception.

Many people upgrade from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0 with the idea that Wife 1.0 is merely a UTILITIES & ENTERTAINMENT program. Wife 1.0 is an OPERATING SYSTEM and designed by its creator to run everything. It is unlikely you would be able to purge Wife 1.0 and still convert back to Girlfriend 7.0. Hidden operating files within your system would cause Girlfriend 7.0 to emulate Wife 1.0 so nothing is gained. It is impossible to uninstall, delete or purge the program files from the system once installed. You can not go back to Girlfriend 7.0 because Wife 1.0 is not designed to do this.

Some have tried to install Girlfriend 8.0 or Wife 2.0, but end up with more problems than the original system. (Look in your manual under "Warnings-Alimony/Child Support".)

I recommend you keep Wife 1.0 and just deal with the situation.

Having Wife 1.0 installed myself, I might also suggest you read the entire section regarding General Partnership Faults (GPFs). You must assume all responsibility for faults and problems that might occur, regardless of their cause. The best course of action will be to enter the command C:\APOLOGIZE.

In any case avoid excessive use of the Esc key because ultimately you will have to give the APOLOGIZE command before the operating system will return to normal. The system will run smoothly as long as you take the blame for all the GPFs.

Wife 1.0 is a great program, but VERY high maintenance. Consider buying additional software to improve the performance of Wife 1.0. I recommend Flowers 2.1 and Chocolates 5.0.

Do not, under any circumstances, install Secretary With Short Skirt 3.3! This is not a supported application for Wife 1.0 and is likely to cause irreversible damage to the operating system.

Best of luck,

Tech Support

THE FINAL CUT emanates from an emotionally and physically abused computer in an inner sanctum in the heart of Northeast Altoona, PA. The opinions spouted off with total disregard for the feelings or weak emotional stability of lesser beings are solely those of D'Scribe (Jim Price), D'Drummer (Kevin Siegel), Da Boy (Mark

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