

Loud mouth with a soft heart: Henry Rollins

Legendary rocker, intellectual and friend to the LGBT community to perform at Tremont

by David Moore

Favored music in the LGBT community usually borders somewhere between good ol' American pop and folk music to R&B and dance. There's not usually too much room left for hard rock or punk.

Truth be known, the latter hasn't always been so friendly to queer fans. But there are exceptions, of course. Henry Rollins is one of them.

"I've never on any level had a problem with it," says Rollins, in an exclusive interview with Q-Notes.

"To me your sexual orientation is really a boring topic. If you're gay, great, you're bi, whatever, you're straight, so?

It's about as interesting to me as your astrological sign. I don't care. You like to be naked with a guy, well go get one. I don't care."

Rollins is legendary for his sharp tongue and willingness to speak his mind bluntly about subjects that hold an interest for him. Despite a history of homophobia from rockers of similar ilk (Axl Rose, for example), Rollins is

upfront about his opinions on gay sexuality. "I'm heterosexual and gay men hit on me," he pauses for a moment, as if he's searching to find the right words.

"Well, maybe not as much as they used to," he laughs. "Like when I was in my 20s and my cheekbones were still all pointy. Now that my hair is grey I don't get hit on as much as I used to...but I used to!"

"So it never bugged me. I mean a guy thinks I'm hot. Is that offensive to me?"

"No, not in the least. I've never had a problem with homosexuality because I think it's as solid a sexuality as heterosexuality."

Rollins began his career in 1981 with the band Black Flag. A huge fan of the punk band prior to joining, he and friend Ian MacKaye drove to New York City to see Black Flag perform at the Peppermint Lounge. Later that evening they played at a small club nearby and Rollins jumped on stage and took the mike for a turn.

A few days later, he was called back to New York to audition for the band.

Rollins spent the next six years riding in vans, sleeping on the run and getting beaten to a pulp on stage while he fronted one of the most notable punk bands of the era.

Since 1986 Rollins has fronted his own band (The Rollins Band) and appeared as an actor in a number of TV shows and films. He's also penned a handful of books, including his autobiography, *Get In The Van*. These

days he's probably just about as well known for his poetry and acting as he is his music.

His current tour (he plays Charlotte's Tremont Lounge June 11) and new CD features solely the music of Black Flag. What's more — all of the proceeds will go to help the West Memphis Three.

What's that? You ask. West Memphis Three?

In a nutshell, here's the story: Three teenage boys — Damien Echols, Jason Baldwin and Jessie Misskelley — were convicted in the murders of three eight-year-old boys — Michael Moore, Chris Myers and Steve Branch.

HBO produced two documentaries about the case — *Paradise Lost* and *West Memphis Three*, which explored the extreme lack of evidence used to convict Echols, Baldwin and Misskelley.

Currently Echols sits on death row awaiting death by lethal injection, while Baldwin and Misskelley will spend — for all intents and purposes — the rest of their natural lives behind bars.

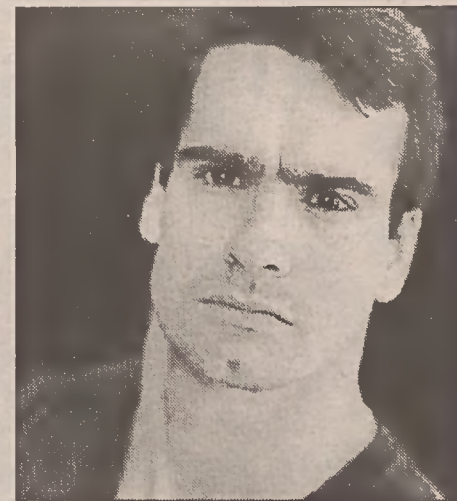
A look at *Paradise Lost* will provide some distinct insight into the story or a visit to the web site at www.wm3.org.

Rollins is much like the average viewer when it comes to the topic of *West Memphis Three* (WM3).

"I saw it on television, and it really raised some red flags and some questions in my mind," he explains.

"I felt like these guys were convicted with a supreme lack of evidence."

After numerous dead ends on appeals, with new evidence some possible light may be appearing at the end of the tunnel for WM3.



Henry Rollins

Residual DNA material from underneath the fingernails of the murdered boys, never before tested, stands to offer new light into the case if it is found that it does not match any of the convicted.

Rollins is enthusiastic, but realistic.

"It may show everything or nothing," he says matter-of-factly.

But the government refuses to pay for the testing, so I decided I would. It's very expensive — hence the CD and the concert tour.

"I don't know if they're guilty or innocent," he professes. "But I do want to see justice done here. This may answer some questions."


info:

The Rollins Band performs at:
Tremont Music Hall
400 West Tremont Ave. . Charlotte, NC
704-343-9494
www.tremontmusichall.com



Rollins Band

white



rabbit

BIG Book Sale!

Hardcovers cheaper than paperbacks!
Paperbacks cheaper than the internet!
New titles arriving each week!

Go to WhiteRabbitBooks.com
for titles and prices

Charlotte:
1401 Central Ave. 28205
(704) 377-4067

Raleigh:
309 W. Martin St. 27601
(919) 856-1429

GLBT



Charlotte Business Guild

Meeting Date:
Tuesday, June 17, 2003

Program:
Politically Out:
A Panel Discussion with Gay Politicians
Holiday Inn, College and 7th St.
Social 5:30 pm - Dinner & Program 6:30 pm

To Reserve:
Cost \$20
Call 704-565-5075 by 12:00 pm
Monday, June 16, 2003
charlottebusinessguild.com

“★★★★★...
Stunning!”
Charlotte Theatre Magazine

FIRST FRIDAYS are lesbian & gay nights at the Rep! Purchase a First Friday subscription and join cast members and Rep staff for post-show receptions at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center. Order your subscription TODAY!

“...this talent rules!”



“...absolutely terrific!”

ArtSavant

Readers' Pick: Best Theatre Company
Creative Loading

the rep
charlotte
repertory theatre

704.333.8587 x111
www.charlotterep.org

Pump Boys and Dinettas
Jar the Floor
intended for mature audiences
All of the People, All the Time
Duke Power Theatre, Spirit Square
Hamlet
Barefoot in the Park

Booth Playhouse, NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

ARIS & SCIENCE COUNCIL

ARTS

Seeing is believing.