

The death of mainstream?

Big labels can sometimes be good, really good. And as the post-'80s trend of marketing the eclectic little guy heightens, as well as brightens the eyes of our music industry's hungry overlords, it makes me happy.

Hold your tomatoes, but I'm glad that many of the same kids who have grown up swearing to Janet and Michael Jackson, the New Kids, Madonna and any other Top 40 (over) night-lite are familiar with names like R.E.M. and Sonic Youth. It's healthy, it's important. It's subversity that now sells! For once, "Yeeshaw music industry!"

Maybe, just maybe, kids who buy Bad English, Damn Yankees and The Rembrandts (doesn't Jon Waite play in all three?) records will happen upon a nifty looking album by Amherst, Massachusetts' angst-rocking Dinosaur Jr. Why? Because it's got Warner Brothers' muscles to penetrate the vast advertising outlets: from making billboards in New York city, to half-page ads in *Rolling Stone* to ornate PR displays in Record Bars across the land!

The subversive fury in J Mascis' musical genius now has the chance to hit little Johnny Jones in Armpit, Oregon, just like Vanilla Ice did. Alas, the American way has reached inward, happening upon the 'alternative' as its freshest ploy, its newest and most progressive formula to mass success. >>> Massive push = massive accessibility = probable mass consumption. And the wheel turns ...

The aforementioned Mascis, founder, writer, singer, guitarist and overall executor for Dinosaur Jr. as well as blatant artiste nouveau, is likened to Evan Dando (Lemonheads) and Paul Westerberg (The Replacements).

This is not only because their personally conceived/spearheaded bands have respectively and respectfully devolved into solo affairs with the same 'group' name, making their hard-nosed, gritted approach to music and lyrics that much more fitting, but because they have now "made it" in the business, at least in terms of major-label status. Lemonheads are now on Atlantic Records and The Replacements are on Sire. (See the

LAYTON CROFT

Tone Def

record review of Dinosaur Jr.'s newest album in this issue of *Omnibus*!

This new movement has clouded the terms "college radio," "college music," etc., because former indie/alternative giants are getting big-hitter boosts, obviously not to these once 'closet' now 'everywhere-you-turn' artists' displeasure. Hey, wouldn't you rather eat lobster than Spaghetti-O's before a show? Or travel deluxe coach than push your not-yet-paid '73 Ford van to the club?

Okay, if you're the die-hard in favor of small-label do-it-yourself-all-the-way-even-if-you-never-play-an-arena bands, consider this: beyond the photo sessions, PR blitzkriegs, covers of *Esquire* (or *Tiger Beat* for that matter) and Hollywood celeb-bashes, what is the art at stake here? The art?

Every true music fan's deep-down, grace-saving, cross-all-your-fingers-and-toes hope is that the answers are: inspiration, creation, expression, message and the sweetest of all, passion! Is that fool's gold? Damn, I hope not.

In fact, after seeing now world-huge Perry Ferrel, Jane's Addiction's nipple-pierced, cross-dressed, angry, angry young lead singer and statement maker all over MTV, I smile inside. For heaven's sake, he smoked dope on stage in concert in North Carolina—the same state where Jesse Helms is employed. Gee whizz, scratch your head, roll your belly and think about it.

I don't necessarily condone his act but I applaud the system, whether its reasoning for aligning the likes of Perry to that of INXS in terms of big bucks support be "free reign to artists who pull in the big green," or "free reign to the artists," it is good.

Evidence is making the latter option a stronger case to argue these

days, when anti-establishment, First Amendment expression and truth-searching albeit sometimes militant movements, whether they are surface-sham crusades or born, bred and vein-flowing convictions, are more accessible due to the uprooted underground growth privy so long to only college hipsters and new-generation beatniks.

This is not to say a typified artist has always been granted leeway to deviate from the norm, explore the craft, sport neon skin or cut off his/her ears, but for such folks to cut into the pop market in a subtle tour de force, is groundbreaking, revolutionary and absolutely wonderful!

Sure, the Beatles, the Doors, Andy Warhol, Led Zeppelin, the Sex Pistols, David Bowie, Ozzy Osbourne and many others were controversy-spawning radicals who cashed in big on the pop market, but they came in swallowable doses. Speaking of, most of those people reached 'pop' status when most of America was dosing anyway.

So where does such a seeming open-mindedness towards different, un-mainstream music come from? Are we willing to spend our increasingly tighter bucks on the newest trend we've been dished (on a silver platter), or are we, dare we say, culturizing, possibly multi-culturizing?

Well I say, with my optimistic cap firmly in place, that regardless of reasons, it is good.

In fact, seize this opportunity, all you intelligent though starved Americans. If the food is on your plate, give it a nibble. (You can always spit it discreetly back into your napkin ...)

So, to all the big-labels looking for and promulgating delightful and needed change, if the market is there, hey, bring the weirdies, wackies, uglies, leftists and sub-poppies. Put 'em on your CBS, Warner Brothers, Geffens, Artistas. Yo, bring the noise: it makes for a much more cultured, less calculated culture.

MUSIC BRIEFLY

Quite possibly the only reason to visit N.C. State

They'll be howlin' this weekend at N.C. State. It's a springtime soiree, a mid-semester melee or maybe just another outrageous weekend at State! Nevertheless, Wolfstock is back and will feature five major bands, fun for everyone and hopefully good weather for all.

Wolfstock is a clever name, derived from the mega-music festival that occurred in New York a long time ago and featured music, hippies and such. Well now, in 1991, Wolfstock (getting the other part of its name from State's lovely rabid mascot) will include performances from recording artists Fishbone, Information Society, Maggie's Dream and two local cover bands.

The six-hour concert is this Sunday, April 7. But for more action and fun, there will be a softball tournament on Friday and Saturday. Ticket holders may watch both games, but sorry, the teams have already been picked. Tickets for the weekend cost \$5 for State students and \$8 for the privileged others. Also, all proceeds raised from the softball games will go toward buying new uniforms for State's baseball team. How nice.

You must be 21 years old to drink alcohol, which is permitted on the Intra Mural fields where the concert

will take place. The alternate rain site is Reynold's Coliseum.

The concert itself should offer a variety of musical sounds from the funk/thrash of Fishbone, to the intelligent techno-attack of Information Society to the Lenny Kravitz/Terrence Trent D'Arby/James Brown-meshed sound of Maggie's Dream. The two cover bands will most likely play songs everyone already knows, and may have heard hundreds of times before.

N.C. State student Brian Garrett said this will be his second year attending Wolfstock and he's really looking forward to it. "It's nice not to have to worry about upcoming exams," Garrett said. "It (Wolfstock) is a nice release."

So if you have nothing planned for the weekend, chug on over to State in Raleigh and howl your lungs out at Wolfstock.

But don't forget a valid I.D., a neon cooler, thermo-nuclear-protection multi-colored sunglasses that come with a free elasto-strap, your short shorts and a partyin' spirit!

Garrett said it best: "Picture 5,000 college students sitting in the sun getting drunk and listening to music."

—Layton Croft

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