

Why is Minneapolis so cool?



Magnolias

Gee! Why is Minneapolis so cool? MATTER zine said it was and that's pretty cool, I guess and everybody knows we have a cold climate too, but I've lived here for some time now and I don't see what's so cool about it. Like most musical climates we have our share, or hot bed if you will, or great/important bands but also like other towns we have our huge share of "in-scene" bullshit that leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. I know this is a contradictory to what you've heard or read, but it's true. Back-stabbing, back-sliding, rumors, rhetoric and neck-deep political bullshit. If there really is a huge amount of comraderie and equal supportiveness, than I must be blind 'cause I don't see it. I mean is it "cool" just for starters, to have your musical tastes slandered right to your face when you purchase a "certain kind" of record? Not that it's happened to me specifically (God help the moron that does), but I've heard of it and seen it happen several times at various vinyl emporiums. A sure-fire way to eliminate what could be potentially consistent patronage not to forget cold-hard frog skins. Or there's the case of who's in whose corner when it comes to new kids on the block. Not that it works for all bands, but nonetheless it has some pull to be sure. I don't know. I really don't think our music scene is that bad and I don't want to go to great lengths in desecrating it. Why else would I have hung on this long? It's because there is enough good to outweigh the bad, but sometimes all the above can be an intollerable bring down. I guess it all tallies up to plain ol' human nature and I wouldn't doubt it for a second that the same tripe is encountered in the polka scene, the office or anywhere really. The main point is though that many folk and bands have chosen to eliminate their presence under the weight of such mediocrity. For those of us intimately involved

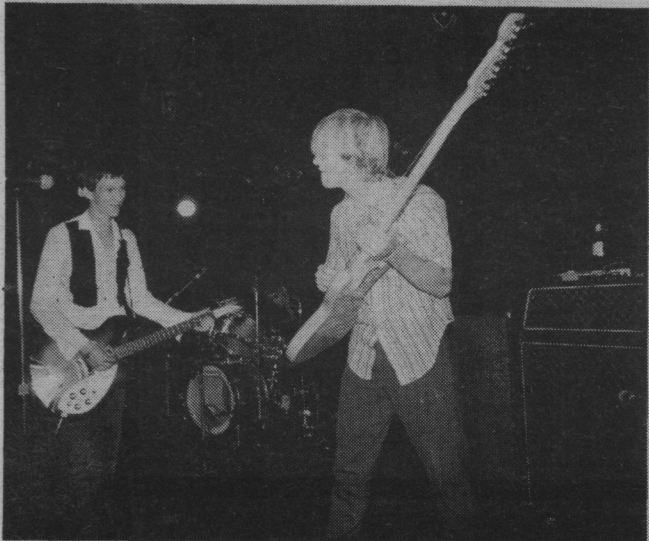
Motorhome



here. Surely none of the above can be denied. We've all had our part, myself included, but in order to achieve a more positive flow of things is to subsist in the wallowing and be persistent toward a more substantial level of quality that can only enhance the overall affect that the vast pool of talent this town does possess needs to continue and grow.

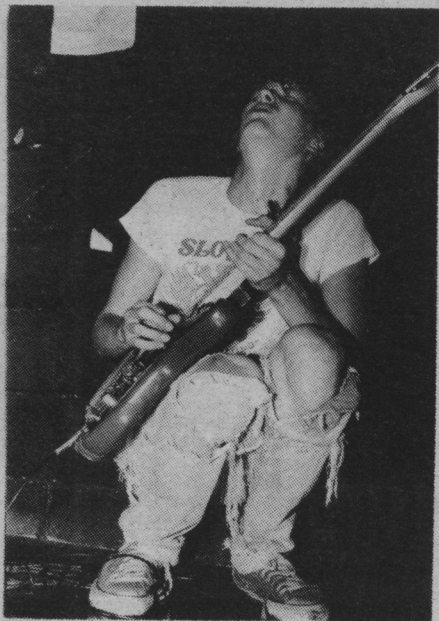
The main focus of this column will be not to bitch, but to put light upon the bands that you don't normally read about from this area. Some you will have undoubtedly heard of but being stationed here gives us the advantage to go a little deeper, 'cause we're not operating under second-hand knowledge. It's weird around here sometimes. A band such as LAUGHING STOCK for instance, flogged the clubs 'round here for quite sometime, gained a substantial following, released an album which recieved solid and positive response nationally and then up and dis-banded. Was it personal frustration or were they disagreeing? Or was it the strain of the above bullshit? I don't really know but then of course I haven't gotten around to asking yet - but I will. . . Stuff like this however, can only be considered as discouraging. One also wonders why extremely talented bands such as GROUND ZERO, NORTH EQUATOR NINE, and SUMMER OF LOVE to name but a few, are shunned by any substantial local followings. It's funny how that you could attach some wordly praise in the form of some printed lip-service by any certain "hip" journalist and BLAMMO! - people flock in droves. Usually at least. Ok? We don't really consider ourselves to be "hip", but we are somewhat with it and besides it's sort of our job. So, with this in mind, here is our first installment of this column. We'll try to cover two

or three bands per issue with the local elements willing.



THE MAGNOLIAS; remember their name, 'cause in the year to come you're going to hear a lot about them. Their sound is of a garage/pop nature. Loud, snotty, aggressive and explosive are all good solid indicators of the MAGNOLIAS thang. In the short year that they've been together, they have been able to capture a large following of admirers and with the release of a forthcoming album already in the can, their established notoriety will be stretching beyond our borders. More on them in issues to follow, so keep your eyes and ears on the lookout.

MOTORHOME much to my chagrin have called it quits, due to the interests of its members differing. Take a little pop, R & B and folk, toss in some punk, a little MOTORHEAD, and lots of thrash and quirks, and this may be the best way to describe them. Fortunately, they do have a cassette available so you may wish to check it out. These guys wee low-key, casual and an overlooked twin-town essential now gone. Bassist Rob Weum has reformed the BABY ASTRONAUTS, playing guitar, so hope is not lost. Brothers Eric (guitar) and Jay Pierson should have things of their own brewing soon and while some are bumming 'bout MOTORHOME's demise, relax 'cause there's these little murmurs floating about, leading to a possible reformation. Let us pray!



OTTO'S CHEMICAL LOUNGE is another one of those in a long line of great bands gone dead. Originally formed from the ashes of two other bands - Paul Osby was the guitarist for the BLU HIPPOS and Tom Hazelmeyer, vocalist/screamer of TOD LACHEN went on to play bass and sing for OTTO'S. At this time it must be mentioned that Osby also played guitar for TOD LACHEN. Out of the complacency and boredom spawned by the early Minneapolis hardcore/thrash scene, both found it necessary to venture into new ground. We're talking late '82 early '83 now, so it is easily said that OTTO'S was the first in this area to bash around the psychedelic/blues oriented garage /punk format that had died with the 60's, well maybe the HYPSTRZ (now the MDFOS), but they didn't venture into obtuse psychosis the way these young saplings did.

OTTO was a fictional character whose stationery John Anglim (drums) and Hazelmeyer discovered in a dumpster. The idea was to take the extremes of punk and mix 'em with the acidic musical leanings of such noteworthies as the MCS, BLUE CHEER, and of course Jimi Hendrix and shuffle them about to come up with an original sound

that really had nothing to do with the current 60's garage revival trash that has since been hanging like halitosis (Rhino breath, if you will).

Finally adding one Dale Nelson, a one time fan and roadie for the CHOCOLATE WATCHBAND and some ten years the rest of the band's senior. It was Nelson's ragged vocal squelching that added a more abrasive edge to what OTTO'S was quickly festering. Disagreements over the band's first EP for Reflex Records saw Hazelmeyer packing it in for the Marines, a few months after the project's completion. Enter Paul Piedmont on bass, who didn't really have the competent musical flow to follow in Hazelmeyer's footsteps. He didn't last too long, being replaced by ex-KINDERGARTEN bassist and former art and design student Al Schroeter. Here's where the band took all by storm with Al giving the band an incendiary bottom end, equally complemented by the addition of Anglim's second bass drum. The band just rocked like mad with the equivalent force of a locomotive, playing some covers, such as "Shaking All Over" as powerfully as when the WHD first covered it and the originals displaying as much force and a teetering off the edge sensibility that grew and toured and grew and toured resulting with the release of "Spillover" on Homestead Records. Midnight Records was also interested, but the offer was ridiculously paltry.



It did take a long time for "Spillover" to see the light of record stores, close to a year, in fact. This coupled with responsibility of problems, personality conflicts and impatience brought the band down as I'm sure it's done to many another band gone by. Indeed, what OTTO'S as a band served up was more than awesome. Osby's guitar work was the workings of some mystifying internal force 'cause certainly on the surface he could have been read as an idiot savant otherwise. Al's bass playing was meaty at the least and Anglim's drumming was just one of those things that just continually multiplied with improvement every time out. A very quiet guy, but put him behind his traps and he explodes. Dale's crooning improved vastly too, and his stage antics were very well recieved.

"Spillover" was a welcome display of OTTO'S varied and collective spirit and talents though the production, which came off muffled, failed to properly display the true crunch and power that was OTTO'S in a live setting. Anglim, frustrated, decided to leave the band. In turn Paul and Al asked Dale to walk which in turn has left the remaining two with a difficult task in filling those two's vacancies. Whether or not they'll succeed is another story. It has already been some six months or so, so who's to say? In the meanwhile, OTTO'S has two new songs to be released on the upcoming "Big Hits of Mid-America Volume Four". They succeed, I believe, in capturing a more succinct picture of this band-in-limbo's true power. See for yourself. Hazelmeyer and Anglim, in the meanwhile have embarked on the HALO OF FLIES project and is a most worthy thing in itself.



Once in awhile a band comes along whose stark power grabs your attention in the same manner that a police bull-horn might break up your party. . . "Attention! Attention! Take that "We're an American Band" shit off now and go home!" Well, living in Minneapolis one becomes all to familiar with these sorts of police infringements in fact, you can find it well documented on the Placemat's (sic) "Stink" EP. If you're not familiar with that band then you probably didn't even know that Minnesota has as many treatment centers as it does lakes. Some ten thousand to be sure. Just look at a topographic map of this state and you'll liken it to a piece of dilapidated Swiss cheese. However, what this state lacks in solid land mass (and grey matter) it makes up for in the amount of great bands that it does have.

Like SOUL ASYLUM, a band that has put together what could be the best, most versatile rock album to be released upon an unknowing public this year. The name of the record is "Made to be Broken". Formerly LOUD FAST RULES, Dan Murphy (guitar and vocals), and Karl Mueller (bass) were two carryouts at a local Lund's supermarket who met up with Dave Pirner (guitarist, pianist, sax player, drummer, crooner, and chief songwriter) who was at that time four years ago in a band called THE SCHITZ. The line up was completed with the addition of Pat Morley (former drummer who has since been replaced by Grant Young), with a nucleus of operations completed, the four proceeded to stomp some serious head in the likened fashion of such epic bands as MCS, DEEP PURPLE, THE STOOGES, and so on. While they did (and regularly continue to) play covers of these band's songs, they possessed a talent for writing original material that had an equal effect of those that they chose to emulate. Though the name LOUD FAST RULES was befitting, the band will tell you, "We never liked that name. We just used it because we were going to start playing out and stuff and we needed a band name but quick, so that was the easiest thing we could come up with for that time." Back then, says Murphy, "We were just playing strictly for the fun of it." Pirner reiterates, "Yeah, we were just into like, humming and strumming and bumming everybody out." Twin/Tone Records A & R Rep., David Ayers once upon a time could relate to this modicum of operations. "Pete Jesperson (REPLACEMENTS manager) and Blake Gumprecht (ex-Twin/Tone) were pretty much responsible for signing them", sayeth Ayers, "I didn't care for them much at all 'cause I felt there was more interest on the band's part in exhibitionism and liquor than playin' rock and roll. To be fair, I really didn't give them a chance but





after a degree of persuasion I went and saw them a few more times and it finally clicked. Back then, I was a disinterested party because primarily, when they went out on tour they wouldn't stay in contact with the label and all kinds of people were calling in response to the first album wanting to do radio spots and interviews and stuff with the band and there was no way I could coordinate things for them 'cause they didn't stay in touch.. All I could do at that time was wash my hands 'cause there really was nothing I could do for them. Since then, though, they have grown up a lot and have come to realize that there's more to being in a band than just being able to piss people off. They've definitely improved their priorities and I think that in copying a more professional attitude that they have become very easy to work with."

SOUL ASYLUM's new album "Made to Be Broken" is a record full of serious yet fun songs. In fact, it is a record that is fully loaded with songs that stand out, each with their own individual merit. A graceful accomplishment that few guitar bands throughout the history of rock can boast of, and I'm talking the world over! O.k., now to justify all of this, I've carefully prodded Pirner and Murphy to explain themselves more thoroughly:

Pirner: Our style really didn't start to change until shortly before Morley quit. We had reached a point where diversity was becoming more and more important. It was a matter that had been in my mind since we first formed this whole thing, and that we were going to strive to incorporate as many ideas as possible into our music. Be willing to tap into anything that could be possible to pull off, or at least to make an attempt at it win, lose, or draw. A large part of it had to do with being bored by doing the same thing over and over again to the point of aggravation. If people are going to stick their noses up at what we're doing, we really couldn't care.

Murphy: I think it's commendable that we try to do things differently. It has a great deal to do with why we dropped most of our older songs. Besides our new material feels and sounds so much better to us.

Pirner: We played a lot of our old shit this last time in the studio, and it was like, "we've been playing this stuff for years". I think you can tell by listening to the new stuff that we're excited about playing it. It's not like playing a riff that you're bored with because you've been playing it for so long. It's like, you can go see any band that has been around for awhile and they'll play something that they used to play four or five years ago, and you can tell that it just doesn't have the same feeling and effect that it originally had. It's just not the same anymore.

Murphy: It's like if you can't thrill yourself than you're certainly not going to thrill anyone else. Since we've learned to have a lot more patience, and with that has come more confidence in achieving a certain level in our songwriting that we've wanted to reach.

Pirner: When Morley left the band, we were in like, this four month hiatus before we found Grant Young, so we were doing the "Muellerhead" three piece thing with me on drums and in that time Danny and I also sat around a lot with acoustics. Y'know? It was a plain, stripped down approach to writing new material without all the normal interference that electric guitars and drums so easily create, and that's pretty much where the vocal harmonies started to come more into play.

Murphy: Yeah, it was pretty much the point where we decided to utilize the vocal harmony element more than we had in the past.

Pirner: We always wanted to do vocal harmonies, so with us it was a matter of establishing the right coordination to pull them off effectively. I think we're caught in this thing where we're into putting as many musical elements as possible into one song. To use enough imagination in our singing and playing all at the same time. Singing for me is lots of fun and when I first got into this aggressive rock shit, or whatever you want to call it, it was initially an outlet for my rage and in turn it dawned upon me that I did originally know how to sing from way back when. So instead of continuing with the screaming and yelling I had made a decision to start singing again, and low and behold, Danny can sing pretty good too. Fuckin' A!

Murphy: A big thing with the harmonies, too, is this big demand to be willing to work real hard at it, 'cause it's such an all involving thing where you have to be real familiar with the other persons part as well as be able to follow the music itself. To be able to play your part at a comfortable level where it becomes second nature and you have to know what does and doesn't work, too.

How about your lyrics? They seem to be quite the soul-baring affair.

Murphy: My lyrics are pretty much word-games; tongue-in-cheek cynicism. Like I guess you could say that "Long Way Home" off of the single is a song about ambition; get off your butt and try to meet your own expectations. Your personal goals and stuff. "Can't Go Back" is about growing up and facing the day in day out responsibilities that are set and expected of you. When I wrote that I was working as a cashier and I was really bored to tears with it to the point where I was questioning the possibility that maybe I wasn't having much of an effect or choice in the outcome of the things going on with and around me.

O.k., before you improperly lead yourself to believe that "Oh, here's yet another band singing about the 'gripes of life', I'd like to dispel that quickly by saying that: SOUL ASYLUM write songs that are sincerely sensitive. Nothing more, nothing less. To listen to their material is to hear real unpretentious honesty. Another thing that so many bands fail to match. . .

Pirner: I guess a big reason why we sound so unorthodox is because we lust for innovation. We're just trying to do something new with the conventional four piece rock band. For me personally, that's what I like to do and that is why I'm into this. I like to challenge myself and I like to challenge people as well and see just what they can handle. On our first album it was like I bitched about everything. Here's a song about money. Here's a song about religion, and here's a song about cops. Now that I have that out of my system, I want to move on to the next step. So with all the bitching and complaining about what's wrong with everything else, I've put that aside and I can turn around and actually deal with what is really inside of me. It's not a matter of telling people what to do, it's taking my own thing and sort of tossing it to the four winds in hopes that maybe someone will grasp that. If not agree with it, at least use it comparatively. Y'know, somebody could go, "Oh, I see that's how he feels". It's not like somebody trying to bullshit you, it's just a guy offering his own perspective. There are some pretty theme-like things on the new record and there's some pretty un-theme-like things too. "Lone Rider" is a song about wanting to run away from all of your problems, etc., and how other people may view that sort of introverted behavior. For me, I like my independence and with that I like to be free of most ties and obligations. It's like when I get back from being on tour, I'm usually pretty alien as to what the scene is back home and someone will come up to me and say, "Hey, where have you been?". I feel like I really don't want to talk about it, 'cause that person may not be able to understand where I'm coming from. It's like I just want to go back out on the road again as quickly as possible and just get away from it all. I guess you could say my songs are declarations of my own human condition.

In light of your evolution, if you will, do you harbor any regrets in releasing your first album?

Murphy: Naw. For that time that's where we were at, so I guess you could say that it was appropriate for that time. It certainly wasn't a revolutionary record in any musical terms.

Have you guys given any serious thought or consideration to the possible backlash that you may encounter due to both the facts that, one, you are from Minneapolis, and two, Bob Mould of HUSKER DU has produced all three of your releases?

Pirner: For all of us it was a very natural progression, Bob has always been supportive of the band from the start. Besides just being our friend we happen to believe that he is the most capable person in town to work with. His knowledge and experience is a real overwhelming thing to witness. The guy's just incredible 'cause he really has his stuff down to a science. But to the other part of your question you have to realize that, that was the whole "Say What You Will" concept; people always trying to pin you down for something that you're really not. Stuff like that can only be taken with a grain of salt, 'cause it's either said out of a lack of intelligence or for lack of any better way of comparing something. I really don't let that kind of thing effect me, 'cause I don't think it will hold much credence once people realize that we are our own band. On the other hand, we don't really feel that we make that great of a first impression, either.

Murphy: Y'know, for us, our expectations are nil. I mean just for the most basic reason is we don't want to set ourselves up for some big fall or anything. No expectations, no disappointments. It's not as if we don't care about what we're doing, it's just the reality of knowing that we're already four years away from being some overnight sensation, so it's pretty inconsequen-

tial. If we get some big break I don't think it's going to change who we are or what we want to be doing, 'cause we're always going to be the same group of guys doing the same things we've always wanted to do. It would be honest to say that our aspirations and goals are much more clearly defined in comparison to when we first started, but for right now we just have to take things as they come. Hopefully, though, we've seen the worst of it from here on out.

How did you come up with the name SOUL ASYLUM?

Pirner: It was a verse in a I-hate-this-word-poem that I had written. I woke up one morning and looked it over and thought, "Hey, this is cool," so I brought it up with the band and everybody agreed. Simple as that.

What other names did you consider? I seem to remember one that was pretty funny: "Burger Massage"?

Pirner and Murphy: (after a great deal of laughter), Oh, there was "Rug Burn" "Sniffers Row" "Chanker Colony" "Afterbirth Malt". Shit! We argued about changing our name for two years. It was real frustrating.

Was there ever any serious though given as to how the name "Soul Asylum" correlates with your lyrical content? I've noticed that aside from the "soul" thing, you tend to make a lot of references toward insanity and stuff.

Murphy: Y'know our sound man Dave Chisolm brought that up not too long ago. You can bet your ass that we've heard every possible argument. Stuff like the word "soul" implies automatically that we're a soul band in the literal sense that it's soul music as people popularly know it as. I guess you could say that our stuff is from the soul without being "soul" music. I like the name 'cause for me it's nice and non-descript.

Pirner: Hey dud, the world's pretty out of hand and maybe I'm pretty out of hand too. . .

Well since I've seen the band perform countless times I can certainly confirm the fact that Mr. Pirner is indeed "out of hand". On stage he is the matted blond-haired equivalent to that whirling dervish known from cartoon fame as the Tasmanian Devil. SOUL ASYLUM have an uncanny knack for all out aggression while on the other hand they are capable of bringing things to a subtle, low level of ambience, and it is this quality that most notably reigns down with the truest of effect. Songs like the ballad-styled "Never Really Been" with it's Dylanesque feel or the Guns n' Roses guitar dealings of the title track to the heavy metal whumph of "Whoa". As Mould put it, "Both the record and their live set are so well paced and evenly tempered that it's almost frightening." SOUL ASYLUM take the classic crunch and apply it to songs that dictate to that need. After you listen to their songs three or four times it becomes real thrilling 'cause you start to anticipate these big change ups. Their material is more exciting than your typical stuff, 'cause you start to get excited about the basic chorus to come in or some predictably pretty guitar lick to surface. Pirner writes songs that are real idiosyncratic in terms of rhythms and change-ups and with that quirky style it makes for songs that are real jarring. A good counterpoint to Pirner's style is Murphy's style which is more conventional in terms of pop and stuff but his songs still retain that same sort of charge and energy. That's real obvious 'cause they're in the same band but it makes for a good balance. It's a very complementary style and hopefully it will broaden their audience. I guess you could say that if you were to go to the root or the meaning of "soul" than the essence of the word remains intact. Believe me, after listening to this band you'd have a hard time convincing me otherwise. Just take a song like "Ship of Fools" or "Can't Go Back". You will find that they do indeed perpetrate a soulful mood. It's sort of that miscast soul's train of ethics. Most artists feel and relate their thing much more acutely than others. Though SOUL ASYLUM's songs have deep-rooted feelings, it would be fair to say that they don't push any thick degree of misanthropy upon their listeners. SOUL ASYLUM is a band that rock like mad while underneath they don't forage in any high-brow pretensions. Anyway, in the mean time, it is suggested that you go and purchase their new album "Made to Be Broken". And in enjoying this record, I guarantee that you will (as Dr. Doom would say) sit back with the quiet comfort and knowledge that comes with being genetically superior to a toe-sucking sloth that has just been hit by a neuro-diarrhea ray! I really don't see any way you could afford to pass up up this great band.

