

ROCKPOOL

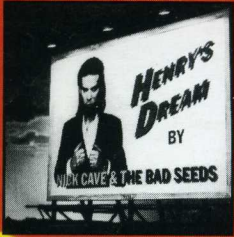
MAY 15, 1992 VOLUME 14 ISSUE 284

L7

INSIDE:
Front Line Assembly
White Zombie

PICKS

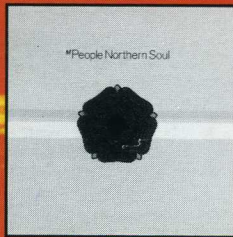
ALBUMS



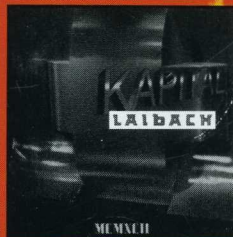
NICK CAVE



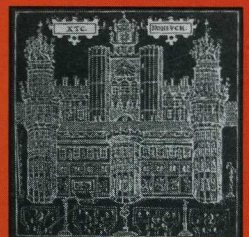
MORPHINE



M-PEOPLE



LAIBACH

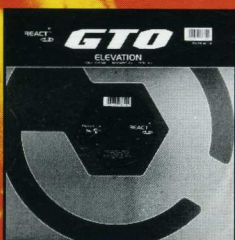


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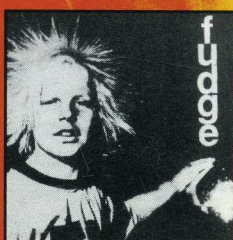
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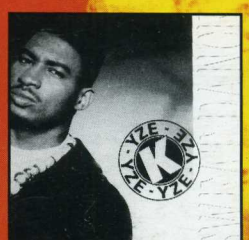
GTO



FUDGE



SAINT ETIENNE



K-YZE

L7: MAG HAGS

(Caution: The basic premise of L7 is "do it, don't say it," so, in their eyes, you can disregard the following article.)

Having a conversation with L7 makes it painfully obvious how ordinary interview banter is based so much on fluff and flirtation. All four of the band members were present for the interview (bassist/vocalist Jennifer Finch, guitarist/vocalist Suzy Gardner, drummer Dee Plakas and guitarist/vocalist Donita Sparks). L7 is scary, but not antagonistic; cordial, but abrupt. They are not angry young women, they are articulate ones, and, thankfully, they took off their omnipresent sunglasses for the interview.

HAG LIES

I once read somewhere that one of the band members had said that L7 will tell all over an expensive lunch. As I see the foursome dressed in their characteristically ragged gear and smacking on tropical-flavored Starbursts, I wonder.

Do you lie in interviews?

Suzi: We don't, like, plant information or anything.

Jennifer: We don't lie. We are sarcastic. Unplanned sarcasm is what it is.

Saying you give a better interview over an expensive lunch is an unplanned sarcasm?

Donita, emphatically: Yes.

I thought so.

HAG HISTORY

L7 formed in 1985, naming themselves after a passe term for 'nerd' (if you put an L and a 7 together it makes 'a square'). They claim their name is pretty much meaningless, although each member boasts of being from the suburbs and of being a "hag," as if they take pleasure in fulfilling some stereotypical definition of 'uncool' (although they know they're not).

The history of the band has followed a healthy (and what used to be typical) course for an underground band. They recorded a very indie LP for Epitaph in 1987 and, in 1990, they put out an EP, *Smell The Magic*, on Sub Pop. Simultaneously, L7 heaped up praising reviews in Los Angeles mags and gained a reputation of being L.A.'s most kick-ass underground band to see live. By 1991, the band had already achieved its original goals ("to go on a national tour and to cut an album"), but, approached with an advantageous deal from Slash Records (famed L.A. underground-label-gone-major), they signed and have just released the LP *Bricks Are Heavy*.

HAG POLITICS

If you know anything about L7, you know the band is politically charged.

The Press makes it out that politics are a huge part of your agenda, is that true?

Donita: No. We feel strongly about certain issues, but as far as being a 'political band' -- no we're not.

Whether they call themselves 'political' or not, the band has involved itself in more than a handful of 'politically correct' events. For one, Donita and Jennifer have recently formed "Rock for Choice" (see sidebar), a fund-raising group which puts together benefit concerts for women's reproductive-rights organizations (the Feminist Majority, amongst others).

"We like to put our money where our mouth is," says Donita, "with benefits and so forth. Recently we've been concentrating on choice but we've done a lot of AIDS benefits...like food for AIDS victims and we

our friend Craig who died [of AIDS]. We did a peace rally during Desert Storm. We also do stuff for KXLU which is our local college radio station...and homeless benefits."

HAG FEMINISM

L7 have also become known for their feminism. First and foremost their motto is "Do it. Be an example. Don't talk about it." And they do 'do it.' They are four women who write and play their music (as opposed to women who just sing) in a genre that has historically been reigned by men. "The whole thing about feminism," says Donita, "is the freedom of choice to do whatever the fuck you want to do so long as it's not going to hurt anybody else."

"A boy playing sports is a boy, but a girl playing sports is a tomboy. I think that's a sexist point of view."

— Donita

But, how do you hope to help things for a woman's situation?

Donita: I think we will help women by setting a good example. I think the response from women, and from men, is very positive...from young kids, both male and female, they've been very happy that we're around and they see us as role models which is kind of cool and flattering.

How are you a good role model?

Jennifer: We are not playing up to any kind of male fantasy which is sort of traditional in rock music, at least to break in. We're just being ourselves.

From looking at them, it seems that 'being oneself' means being tough and uncoiffed. It is the anti-beauty, anti-girl aesthetic. Unset hair with set minds.

by Amy Talkington

Donita, do you think that having a masculine-name-made-feminine plays into your anti-girlness or tomboyishness?

Donita: No, I don't think I'm tomboyish. I was born on my father's birthday and his name is Don so I'm 'little Don Feminine.'

My parents probably wanted a boy because I have three older sisters. And...I was very into sports and stuff, but I don't consider that tomboyish. I was just doing my own thing, but I don't consider it tomboyish. I think tomboy is a sexist term.

Why?

Donita: Because it's calling a girl a boy because she is being physical or being free. A boy playing sports is a boy, but a girl playing sports is a tomboy. I think that's a sexist point of view.

"L7 hate to be called girls. They love to be called hags," boasts a Slash promo letter. "'Girl' expresses immaturity to me," Donita elaborates, "like we are not adults or something. We are *not* children." "And hag," continues Dee, "is always thought of by society as a negative thing, but we think it's a wonderful thing -- beauty at its finest."

HAG GLAMOUR

It's not that L7 simply don't play up their looks, they practically disguise them. You have probably never seen Donita or Suzi's entire face. At their shows and in every picture I've seen published, they are either both wearing sunglasses or Donita has on some kind of a novelty face attachment, like glasses with crossed eyes, or big plastic lips with bloody fangs. When I ask, Dee says that they're wanted by the law.

Would you do a story for a magazine like Vogue?

Suzi: We went into In-Fashion already.

Donita: I'd go into *Vogue*. A girl came up to me at a show in De Kalb, Illinois and was wondering why we were in In-Fashion. She found it violating that we were in that magazine. I don't think we feel that way.

Jennifer: You can only preach to the converted so much.

Suzi: We'd do beauty makeovers as a joke.

Dee: Yeah, *Dynasty* hairdos.



from left to right: Jennifer Finch, Suzi Gardner, Donita Sparks and Dee Plakas

HAGCORE

L7 detest being dished into the category of 'all-female bands.' They do not consider the fact that each of the players is female a significant or qualifying factor. To their disapproval, L7 are often paralleled with all-female bands like Babes in Toyland, Hole, and the Lunachicks in the category coined "Foxcore." While one can assume that each of the letters is proudly a "woman's" band

from its name alone ('babes', 'chicks', 'hole'), L7 argue that they never meant to be all women. Originally, the drummer was not female, and the band insists that the current drummer, Dee Plakas, was chosen only by her musical merits.

Will you say one thing about the term foxcore?

Donita: Niggercore.

What would you rather be called?

Dee: Rock'n'roll band.

Donita and Suzi played in pop-ish bands around Hollywood until they hooked up together in 1985. And, although it's not a part of their rough-edged image, pop does play a part in the sound. "L7 sound like the Go-Go's on a lot of bad crank cut with Drano," said one insightful anonymous college DJ. They play reverent hard rock mixed with irradiant pop. Fervid and politically provoking.

HAG POETS

Why is the LP called Bricks Are Heavy?

Dee: Because they're heavy.

Suzi: If you have a lot of them, they are.

Dee: We just thought it was a funny title. Donita started running out of things to write when people asked for autographs and she started writing "bricks are heavy" and it's just amusing.

Donita: It's inane and stupid and means nothing, that's the way we like it.

Are the lyrics more important than the name of the album?

Donita: Yes.

Are the lyrics as important to you as the music?

Donita: Yes.

Do you give lyric sheets for Bricks Are Heavy?

Donita: No.

Jennifer: What we did in that case instead of providing lyrics was to give 11 different artist friends of ours a single line of a song and have them illustrate that song, so you pull it out and it's like a comic book...And boy was that a project to pull together in two days.

What are your lyrics about?

Donita: Personal experience.



So it isn't true that you don't write love songs?

Jennifer: No.

About the song "Shit List", who's on the shit list and why?

Donita: Anybody who pisses us off or government people or oppressors or irresponsible artists who say really stupid fucking bashing things about people or groups of people.

Like?

They pause.

Like Guns N' Roses?

Jennifer: There's far worse in the mainstream.

Dee: People who bash women or homosexuals. Ignorant, narrowminded...

Jennifer: Dangerous people.

HAG COVER

What's on the cover of the new LP?

Suzi: It's a photo of us

with torches, fire torches and it looks all swirly and beautiful.

Each of you is holding a torch?

Donita: Yeah, but they're swirling and you can't see our faces. You can just see the flames and our feet.

Just how they like it.



L7 DISCOGRAPHY

- 9/88 L7 (Epitaph)
- 1/90 "Shove"/"Packin' A Rod"
(Sub Pop)
- 1/90 "Shove"/"Fast Frightening"
(Sub Pop/Glitterhouse)
- 9/90 *Smell The Magic* EP
(Sub Pop)
- 4/92 *Bricks Are Heavy*
(Slash)

ROCK FOR CHOICE

Recent events have shown that *everyone* must get involved in what they believe. The Pro-Choice Movement is definitely one of those issues and **Rock For Choice** is one way you can get involved. The following are some questions *Rockpool* has put to **Shelly Cryer**, Rock For Choice Coordinator, to help explain what Rock For Choice is and how to get involved.

Q: *How did Rock For Choice get started?*

A: The Rock For Choice concept originated with the members of L7 who wanted to organize the music community around protecting abortion rights. Through L7's commitment and organizing efforts, the first Rock For Choice concert was held at The Palace in Los Angeles in October 1991. This sold-out show featured Nirvana, L7, Sister Double Happiness and Hole.

Q: *What are Rock For Choice's goals?*

A: Rock For Choice seeks to raise awareness and encourage activism among young adults in the fight to keep abortion safe and legal. The purpose is to encourage audience members to educate themselves, speak out, register to vote and learn what they can do to protect their right to abortion and birth control. These concerts also generate the resources necessary to continue national pro-choice organizing efforts.

Q: *What kind of response or impact has Rock For Choice already made?*

A: The response to Rock For Choice has been overwhelming. Already, we've organized nearly one dozen shows across the country -- at which thousands of people have registered to vote, signed petitions and learned how they can participate in pro-choice organizing in their communities.

Q: *How can radio stations get their stations involved?*

A: Radio stations can air our Rock For Choice public service announcement. They can also sponsor and help organize a Rock For Choice concert in their city.

Q: *How do individuals get involved?*

A: Individuals interested in finding out more about Rock For Choice or organizing a concert in their city should contact Shelly Cryer at the **Feminist Majority Foundation and Fund's** offices (8105 West Third St. #1, Los Angeles, CA 90048/213 651-0495)

From a personal point of view?

Jennifer: They're always gonna be from a personal point of view, even if it's about a third person. I mean we have narratives, like "Scrap" and "Everglade" are narratives, but they're still our point of view, even if we are observing someone else or someone else's attitude.

What about the song "Diet Pill"?

Donita: "Diet Pill" is based on a true story told by Willie Nelson on a talk show about how he used to abuse his first wife and how one day, he came home drunk and passed out in the bed and she sewed him up in the sheets and beat him over the head with a frying pan and took off with the kids. And, so it's based on that, about a woman who's abused and finally kills her husband, influenced also by her diet pill wearing off.

Wearing off or too many?

Donita: Combination of the two.

Are there any love songs?

Suzi: Well, ah, "This Ain't Pleasure" is a love song.

About?

Suzi: It's about love not working.

Jennifer: There's a song Suzi wrote called "Monster" which is sort of about the love of a good friend who gets you in trouble all the time when they are around.