

OtR: I'm going through this phase where I feel like I haven't said anything meaningful or interesting or witty for several months now. I read so many interviews with artists and I listen to a lot of public radio where authors and musicians and various creative people are constantly talking about their ideas. Everyone is so articulate and colorful. I'm feeling very run-of-the-mill.

ACM: We were looking back over the newsletter you send out. It's very thoughtful and introspective and mentions a little background on each of you. Whatdoyoudotoentertain yourself when you go to a town to do a show...

OtR: Well..., the antidote for touring, for most of us, is seeking out antiquarian and rare edition bookshops where we can fill the gaps in our libraries... We're fairly bookish people. Bookshops are the most popular haunts, but Brian enjoys wooing nubile girls, Ric likes to

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### From the Editor

It's June 7, 1992 and we're on time with Issue 9. Do we get some kind of reward for being on time? I didn't think Issue 8 would ever get done. Well, it still isn't. We encountered more problems at the post office (bulk mail has many rules), but to the best of our knowledge they've all arrived by a miracle from God. Can you imagine Post Offices around the country delivering 1200 pieces of mail with no return address or postage? If you didn't receive your Issue 8, please drop us a line and we'll send it first class. I've already done so with the few that came back.

We really appreciate the reader surveys that you returned to us. In response to your favorite styles of music, we received the following answers: (in no particular order) grunge, jazz, industrial, medieval, classical, alternative, rhythm and blues, techno-dance, grindcore, ethereal, retro, thrash, rap, funk, alternative polka, southern rock, imported dance, heavy metal, college progressive, and punk. Don't expect new categories for each of these any time soon... Does that about cover it? This helps us to get to know you and re-evaluate our direction. Unfortunately, everyone (except for Brad Caviness who listens to KOKF in Oklahoma City, OK) responded similarly to their local radio...adjectives included heimous, unbalanced, and plain stupid. The answers and suggestions from you have already helped us consider new bands for the third compilation cd and

selecting bands to interview: for example Over the Rhine was requested by several subscribers for an interview. There are so many other bands and topics of interest that we want to cover, nationally and internationally, also, we'd like to cover (and be involved with) local growth in the Pacific Northwest. Thanks for the great ideas. We'll print another reader survey with Issue 10 which arrives with the third compilation disc. Please help us to serve everyone by responding to the next survey.

If you've written to us and I haven't responded...I'm sorry. Please continue to write and I'll try my best to answer it in a timely manner. Concerning back issues, we're running low on some, especially Issue 1. Don't be surprised if you receive only Issue 2 on.

The weather has been unusually warm and dry this year, but Seattle is now paying for it with water restrictions during the summer. Tom and I celebrated our third wedding anniversary on a dinner train last month. Our big night out! Next week, we're going to see King's X at a local club. We look forward to our trip to Bushnell, Illinois, via Glacier National Park and Mt. Rushmore. Also, we're moving to West Seattle in August; hopefully, this move will be the last. Our address (P.O. Box 1273, Sumner, WA) will change then, so look for a new address in October's Issue 10.

anne

## AMA L

ACM Journal New address upcoming See issue 10 for details (206) 863-0632

The Editors Anne Stephenson Tom Stephenson

### Credits

A special thanks to Core the Rhine (covered to Michael Wilson), Fred Thomas, Bill and Michael Passer, Ches Estey, Tracy Jones, Mark Mahasey, Poul Soupeset, Ches, Taylor, Licent Vargos, Charles Gettes, War Bolout, John Thompson, John Stephenson, Breit DeRocher, Marky Bash, Parin Allison, Michael Debarry, Generalism, Mark Elizar, and justifield advertisms & authorities, and our followwho has acceptant overalising forms.

### Advertising

Advertising for Issue 10 is due before October 1,1992. We reserve the right to decline addition and present of one discretion. Ad space must be reserved at least 14 days great to our advertising deadline. Our philosophia, beam day one, is to preside an officedable assence too independent additional progressive companies & distributors to reach as interested alternative audience, and in turn, provide our readers with practical information to use and share with clines.

Our advertising rates are currently \$30 for a 3/86 page ad, \$40 for a 1/4 page ad, \$55 for a 3/8 page ad, \$65 for 1/2 page ad, \$55 for a 3/8 page ad, \$65 for 1/2 page ad, \$85 for a 3/16 page ad, \$95 lara 3/4 page ad, and \$125 for a full-page ad. We can have ada prepared for a naminal fee, but an additional 14 days notice is required. These prices reflect a circulation of 3000 pagers per issue technique retail outlets, music stores, including, and over 1200 paid subscribers internationally. Please phone in for additional ad requirements and advestration. We are currently enlocating to West Seattle, but you can reach us at (206) 863-0632 through October.

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THE CENSORSHIP LIE OWER

Once again, I am dumbfounded by the ignorance of church and conservative government: this time in the area of censorship. Can anyone else see the waterfall that this issue is pushing us toward?

First of all, let's consider that nowhere in the Bible is it stated that rock music (or rap, for that matter) is the source of evil in this world. Sin is the source. Once we admit that parents are the ones responsible for molding and nurturing America's youth, all other issues become nothing more than moot points. No single individual has more influence or potential to change a child than a parent.

Secondly, our responsibility as Christians is not to mold and shape the morality of our nation. Our responsibility is to evangelize and serve in whatever calling God has placed on our lives. Censorship isn't going to win any converts.

Recently on a TV program about the rock-supergroup Van Halen, guitarist Eddie Van Halen stated that they named their latest album F#CK (For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge) because of "...the whole censorship thing, we thought it would be funny." Trying to mold a society clearly bent on the carnal will accomplish nothing. It never has and it never will. Censorship serves as nothing more than fuel for a reactionary fire. A fire that is just as misguided as the fundamentalist campaign

against rock & roll. And in case you were wondering... it is going to get worse. Let's not give the music industry and secular society yet another reason to censor us. They have the resources to put us all out of [the music] business.

Now that's an interesting twist, isn't it? Christian censorship. When's the last time you saw a Petra video on MTV? When was the last time you heard Tourniquet on a secular radio station? When did you last see a big story on a pro-life march on the news? Get the picture?

Some of the parents who advocate censorship are the same parents who let their children watch television shows that undermine the family, advocate violence and sex and glorify sin, take their kids to see movies like Terminator and Platoon, never have devotional time, send their kids to daycare, are alcoholics, listen to secular music themselves, and so on.

Prohibition doesn't work. It's 1992 and people still abuse drugs, rape, murder, cheat on income tax, speed on the freeway, abort children, and participate in any number of other illegal or immoral activities. We shouldn't be surprised. God said it would happen. So why are we in this mess?

Instead of being pro-active, many Christians in the church today have become reactionary. Instead of promoting the Bible and Christianity, we try desperately to oppose everything that contradicts it. I wish we spent one-third of what is spent on album stickering and "erotic content" legislation on Christian videos, music stores, and alternative activities for youth.

There are solutions out there. Help promote Christian artists. Put up flyers, buy tapes, go to concerts. Stop buying secular music and videos. Boycott stores who won't sell Christian music. There are thousands of great, talented artists out there who need your support in every genre of music imaginable. Quit complaining about the "lack of good Christian music" and do your part. Remember the old cliche, "if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." While you're at it, say a prayer or two for brothers and sisters in music who are trying desperately to reach the world with the gospel.

This is America, and people have a right to express themselves. You have a right not to listen, not to buy, and not to support. The Bible speaks of one who will come to judge. That judge is not us. Everybody is talking about the "right to choose" nowadays. Choose life. Choose Christ. Preach the gospel. Feed the poor. Build bridges. Plant trees. Do your part. Leave the censoring to God. That's His job. Many of you ask "who will be the guiding force for morality and righteousness in this country if we don't?" There's your answer...

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One interesting development over the last several months is the tendency for artists in different regions to band together towards a common goal. Historically, artist cooperatives and networks have led the way, or at least influenced the direction of Christian music as a whole. San Francisco gave us Exit Records several years ago, establishing the alternative Christian music scene. While Exit is a memory (well not doing much lately) there is still a musician and artist network called BACAN. We need to talk with them before our October issue and find out what they have going. New York has CMU, but we haven't seen much from them lately, and of course JPUSA in Chicago has paved the way for alternative music everywhere through the work of Rez Band, Cornerstone Festival and Cornerstone Magazine. Los Angeles' Blonde Vinyl is an artist cooperative of sorts also, although it is more formal and resembles a record label more everday. That was then and now, but we thought we'd look ahead.

July 10 and 11, Atlanta is hosting an alternative Christian music festival. Artists from the southeast and throughout the country are converging on Atlanta for two days of music, art and sweat. For twenty dollars you get two stages featuring artists like Stinging Rain, Prayer Chain, and "an artist who plays in a band named after a naughty barnyard animal with a curly tail." Marty Bush (Visions of Gray) said, "We're not set up for camping... motels, yes... because we're close to the city,... but very wooded, and no noise ordinance." The primary goals of this festival "are to glorify God, open the eyes of Atlanta's youth pastors, and raise funds for a permanent underground Christian music club." A 14 song compilation cd of artists throughout the Southeast has been completed for distribution through the Pure Rock Report and regionally. They have also been working to enlighten churches in the region who "cancel gigs because our hair is too long." "Georgia is real tough, but I don't even know where I wish I was," said Marty. For more information on the cd or festival, contact Marty Bush at (404)319-7064.

Seattle has a 14 song compilation cd available also. Fearless Donkey Records, an artist coop, has gathered many of the alternative Christian artists who perform at clubs throughout the Northwest into one cd. This Fall they will start work on another compilation project with additional artists including Pollywog, Waterfront and Blenderhead. Recently, a network called NW Net was organized for individuals working indepently in alternative ministries. The goal is to share ideas and information, working together towards reaching youth, and tackle some larger activities like festivals and radio together. A musician's network, NCMI, has also formed to concentrate on the special needs of performing artists. Access to clubs in nearby towns, recording, distribution, publicity, and avoiding exploitive industry people in Seattle are some of the items initially discussed. A 24-Track digital demo studio is in the works, and one goal is "fostering community in the Christian scene," said Bill Power of Fearless Donkey Records. Chris Estey from Counter Culture Magazine added, "We really want people to know what's available musically... fellowship... etc." One goal is to tie the region together, "from San Diego to Vancouver, B.C." said Power. "Isolation has helped the scene, our scene... underground has a greater chance of flourishing," added Estey. For more information contact us at ACM Journal (206) 863-0632 or phone Fearless Donkey Records at (206) 782-5407.

And San Antonio is beginning to stir. Home of Deitiphobia, Chris Taylor and Situation Taboo, we can probably expect many more good things to come from here. Flat Earth has been formed to sidestep their frustration with labels, work together, fellowship, and more. "We're laying a good solid foundation. We want to protect ourselves from the 'Big Bad Wolves' (labels) which are a disappointment in a Christian crowd." Chris Taylor added, "We have a vision of what it can become, but no specifics... Christian festivals... we certainly have the land for it!" They have a publication - the voice of the Flat Earth artists - titled The Coffeehouse Review. For additional information, write Flat Earth at 9859 IH-10 W, Suite 539, San Antonio TX 78230.

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Fred: For the last year or so, I haven't done any art at all because I've given God 100% of my effort and time. I talk to Alex Seidel alot, and he has me excited about artwork again. It's one of those things that, in college, I'd spend five days in a row painting in the art room and I'd just come out to eat, or practice for crew or rugby, and I'd stay up all night. I've got all these ideas now that I can put onto canvas or paper. I play the sax, though I've had to give that up too because that was another obsession. Artists tend to be obsessive, and I want to think about one thing all the time, all day, and not think about anything else.

ACM: You studied art for two years at Seattle Pacific Universtiy, and that was something that you really enjoyed. After two years there, did you move on to a job?

Fred: No, I basically ran out of money. A bad thing happened to me, and I got gypped out of some money that was promised to me. So I couldn't go the last quarter and had to leave. I went home to Salem, and Rick Snodgrass from Timberlake Christian called me... I was on his heart, he said he just had to give me a try.

ACM: As the youth intern at Timberlake Church

Fred: Yeah, And for six weeks I prayed about going there or staying home ...to move into the ministry, was that my call. For me, someone who wants to go full- everything, to be patient and wait for six weeks...

ACM: So, you've been a youth intern for how lone?

Fred: About ten months.
ACM: And you work
full-time at Redmond Office Supply?

Fred: Thirty hours a week. And I'm paid for 18 hours as youth intern, but we all know that it's not eighteen hours...

ACM: Do you feel limited at all by the church, in your artwork? Or do you even share that with the people there?

Fred: They don't know. Well, the kids in high school know about my artwork because two of them are very good artists.

ACM: What do their parents think about you encouraging them to be a struggling artist?

Fred: Well, the two kids...I haven't talked too much to one parent, but the other one is real supportive. They know that's his talent.

ACM: That's something to work into. It's not something where you can just quit and do art to make a living.

Fred: He wants to be a graphic artist, though. And, his parents know that graphic artists don't do that bad.

ACM: Where do you want to go with your work? You have some paintings you did in college. You've some things in your head you want to put on canvas or paper now. Where do you want go from here?

Fred: I know it's always going to be with guidelines set, but I plan to go as far as possible. But, it can't ever take the place of what I'm doing now. If it takes away from me, then I need to draw the line. That's a frustrating line.

ACM: It's secondary to your work with kids, or work with other people...

Fred: That's hard to say because, again, I tend to go 100% to the artworld.

ACM: How do you see art fitting into the church, ... today's church? Historically, it's been in the church. Do you see your work, or works from other Christian artists, having a place in church other than collecting dust in the frame?

Fred: Art is in the church. It's those pictures of Jesus. Beautiful art! But, I don't think they would allow anything like I do... or like people that I admire do. I don't think there is yet... besides some of the high school / college age people ...there's no acceptance. I come from a Free Methodist background, Foursquare Gospel background. There was no push for art. It's like two different worlds. I don't know about other churches though. Of everyone who has seen my work, a few have accused me of being possessed. Sometimes my Momintroduced me as "my possessed son" as a joke. She just can't understand how somebody can paint what I paint. I told her you have to go through what I went through.

ACM: Why do you paint what you paint? What's your inspiration? How do you arrive at the subject, style,

Fred: That's a journey. The ideas come from (this might sound weird) dreams ...dreams of artwork. I put my artwork in my sketchbook. I wake up, sketch it, and then later try to piece it together like a time bomb. But, in my dreams, I walk into art galleries and see painitings. And I'm afraid. that I've seen this painting somewhere else and my mind is playing it back. Or is it actually my original painting from my brain. I hope I don't paint something someday and have someone say "that's my painting."

ACM: So, it's something that you visualize and then put down. We were looking at some of your pieces, and some of them you mentioned liking more than others. Some mean more to you...

Fred: The ones that mean most to me are the ones that I did out of emotion ...out of fear, hatred, nervousness ... emotions. 1 used to feel a lot more than I do now, at least I used to hate a lot more, I used to get frustrated ...angry. I used to escape a lot and try to find bliss through drugs ...whatever ...and I found it a few times. I have to admit the artwork I did that means the most to me, I did at a time when I was feeling. It all comes from one night walking home from my friends and this girlfriend's house at night and the sky was all red. And I was thinking that Christ had come ...and the fires ...and I was going to be consumed and left. I went home, staying up all night putting that together until nine in the morning... constantly out of fear. That reminds me of the opposite, how I don't have any fear anymore. That painting doesn't scare me. It really symbolizes a step in my life when I've made some changes. That night I re-committed my life to Christ, Still, I still messup alot. And then, sometimes I'll like a painting more just because of the color ...I'll see a color that will motivate me and be the center of my painting and then I'll work from there. That's just a visual, it's supposed to

be aesthetically pleasing to me. I'll just want to do something that I can look at and say, "that's cool; I like that." I'll like the way it looks, ...sometimes that's my motivation. And sometimes I'll do one that I don't like at all and it comes out like that ...and I go, "yuck. Maybe I should trash this

ACM: Are they any obstacles that you see that limit what you paint or who you show it to?

Fred: As I said, I won't and don't usually show my art to other people, because I'm afraid of rejection. Maybe someone saying something wrong. I'm not really open to being critiqued, because I don't do it for that reason. You can't see it ...my eyes are seeing that completely differently than your eyes see it. And, what I get out of it is completely different than you. I'm afraid that someone will misjudge the painting. It frustrates me, ...l'll be drawing and someone will say, "Why do you put that color there?" And you don't understand ...you have no comprehension of why I want blue in this place ... at that moment, there's a reason for why I'm using blue in that place ... and you have no idea. That really frustrates me! I know why I'm doing it, and to me that's why it's important.

ACM: Do you think it's fair for art to be explained? To appreciate art, it requires an explanation sometimes.

Fred: That's true.

ACM: When you look at other people's art, do you find yourself wondering what's behind it?

what's behind it?

Fred: If it's like mine. If you look at Francis Bacon's paintings, you'll see these bodies meshed into one and turning inside out. It's really weird, and you think to yourself, "what's behind this?" I mean, it's good painting, but it's so weird... There are a lot of things out there that are just for aesthetics in my book. They're brilliant, because they came up with an idea that

no one came up with before and it looks cool. That's what is enjoyable sometimes, but where's the emotion in it, whats' behind it? Did you ever see the movie New York Stories with Nick Nolte as an artist? That's, first of all, my dream studio. But if you watch his life, and how he gets ferociously mad, and he'd turn the music up and throw the paints against the canvas, tossing paint across the room. That's painting ...that means something. My dream ... 15 by 30 feet of canvas.

ACM: Do you like any other artists, say ...those who do impressionism?

Fred: I admire those artists a lot more than I'll put them in my house. Andrew Wyeth, is very ...well, not abstract ...he does real life ...a lot of black people in his paintings. But the colors he uses are just incredible. If I can ever get a hold of one his paintings...

ACM: Do they influence you, or is it just an appreciation?

Fred: He influences me. There's a guy named Orlando A. B. ...those two influence my art. Because I admire everything they put out so much...it's almost as if you want to be what they are. They might just create that goal in my life.

ACM: Do you see any opportunities for young Christian artists?

Fred: I don't know, besides producing pictures to be mass distributed among churches ...the nice, calm pictures.

ACM: Now, you're a Christian. How would you say that influences your paintings? Musicians get this asked all the time, "where's your faith in the music you do..."

Fred: It's art. God's involved in my life. So, whatever I do, God's a part of it. A lot of my art directly relates to God...it's a

journey. That's what a lot of musicians say, (we all laugh) "its a spiritual journey." That's what it was for a while. Now I've come to the place where I'm secure ...more like a rock ...not painful anymore. My painting ... the ones that are more violent and abstract, with anger\_that was a fight with God. It's almost a cleansing thing. When I'm done with that painting, I can't stop and come back to that painting, I have to finish it then. When I'm done, it's like I've been through this whole long process from hatred to "I'm sorry."

ACM: Almost a diary, except visual.

Fred: It's that way with my sax too. That ties into God alot more than my art. The praise and worship. I can keep playing and thinking about it.

ACM: Maybe it's cultural. Would you ever consider showing these in a showing? Do you think you'll ever be to the point where you're comfortable with it? Selling some even?

Fred: Now I've come to the point where I could probably sell some ...maybe. I've only given one painting away ... to a best friend. The biggest act of love I've probably ever done for someone, because it was the hardest thing to give away then ...it is my favorite painting too. I won't show what I have out in front of you, because it isn't me now. I feel financially bound and great paintings cost a lot. The colors are spendy. Unless you someone helping or supporting you, you can't do what you want. That's why a lot of my paintings are small.

## FRED PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST





hunt for pre-CBS Stratocasters, and Karin likes to slip away to coffee shops and quiet nooks-and-crannies. I'm always looking for a good chess partner. (At home, when I have time to enjoy, I like to sit in my library and read. There's so much to read. It's something that gives me so many ideas. You learn so much from books. They're not considered incredibly hip, I suppose. There's so much visually high-tech media nowadays. Books may be getting neglected, but there's nothing like a book...something magical and mysterious and blatantly spiritual about books. It's a shame that the flash of MTVstyle media has taken away from the subtle power of the printed word.) The most wonderful thing about touring is meeting people. I'm amazed at how fiercely intelligent some of the people are that we've met along. the way. Some have become beautiful friends. Often, there isn't a lot of free time on tour. It's hard work. But you also develop a rhythm after awhile and it can be very discombobulating to come home.

ACM: Among the literature that you read, are there any favorite authors that you find fascinating, or that possibly even influence some of the songs you write?

OtR: Ric was one of the first members of the band to really start getting into C.S. Lewis. Between Karin, Ric and L. we probably have most of his works in early editions. Rare hardback copies. He's had a big impact on our personal lives. And I really enjoy a lot of the writings of Dylan Thomas. That's a cliche...I know that a lot of pop musicians, including Bob Dylan, like his work. I especially like his prose writing. Thomas referred to himself as 'one: I am a Welshman; two: I am a drunkard; three: I am a lover of the human race, especially of women.'... I've always liked Oscar Wilde. Also, of course, William Shakespeare is unsurpassed. The nice thing about this band is that we get a lot of letters in the mail from fairly articulate people. They turn us on to various writers. It's fun to exchange ideas through the mail with the people that we meet, or those who find our music and seek us out...a very positive thing about being in the band. Letter-writing is another lost art, it's a discipline ...very rewarding thing to do. Karin has been reading everything she can get her hands on by Rilke: Letters to a Young Poet, Rilke on Love and Other Difficulties, etc. Ric likes Charles Williams and Madeleine L'Engle. According to Karin, Ernest Hemingway has influenced us as a band. Also, M. Scott Peck. I have recently been reading the writings of Thomas Merton which have kindled a sort of awe for the Catholic Church. Brian has been reading Anne Rice.

ACM: Do you find it difficult writing letters or reading while on tour? You're currently touring with Adrian Belew. Is that a fairly fast-paced schedule or do you have time to pursue your interests?

OtR: Touring, I find, is an exercise in extroversion. If I'm home, I tend to be alone quite a bit. I'm fairly introspective, introverted, and contemplative... When you get geared up to go on tour, it's easy to get happy and bouncy and... (you're meeting a lot of people that you don't know...) things tend to get a little superficial sometimes. It is very fast-paced; I find it very difficult to find any solitude. We're at the stage right now whereweall travel together. There are usually at least five of us, but we tend to stay in one hotel room. People are sleeping on the floor, and it's very much a group-oriented endeavor. It's hard to keep your perspective when it's so gregarious. And to answer your question, I find it impossible to write while on the road.

ACM: Is it different for you when you get up on stage and actually do a show? Do you prefer the recording aspect more, the writing, or maybe a balance between these and touring?

OtR: The most meaningful part of being in the band is the feeling I get sometimes when I'm trying to write a song... just by myself. I'm sort of tapping into things. Sometimes I don't understand the ramifications of everything that I'm writing. It's very rewarding to watch a song grow, and then live with it for a while. You learn things from it. I do enjoy playing live. I think there are difficult aspects to both, and both can be very rewarding. In the studio, we try to make every note count. We don't achieve this, but we strive for it most of the time. In a live concert, we stretch arrangements and Ric and Brian open up a lot more. They're both wonderful players and I tend to rein them in probably a little too much in the studio. But live, they have the freedom to really cut loose

ACM: Do you ever find yourself adding to or changing songs in the process?

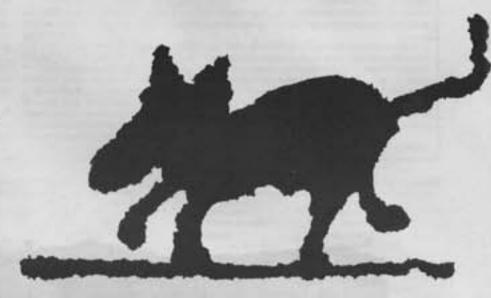
OtR: We're a lot different live than we are on tape, and we like both. But live, we're a bit more aggressive all around. Things are stripped down and a little bit more direct. We also tend to allow improvisation to creep in. Sometimes songs get extended and arrangements grow over time. We have people who feel that the live performances are much stronger than the recordings. Then, we get people who appreciate the recordings more. Hopefully, we land on both feet in the middle somewhere.

ACM: You'll be at Cornerstone this summer, so those who attend will have the chance to compare your live performance with your recordings. You've more dates ahead with Adrian. Then, where will you be?

OtR: For an unsigned band, we do get around. We're based here in Southern Ohio. On this particular leg of the tour, we'll be as far West as San Francisco and Sacramento. We'll be playing a couple nights in a theater in Boulder, Colorado. And, we'll see some mountains, which is rare for us. Not as rare for you... Then, later in the summer, we'll be doing some of the large festivals in Europe, namely Flevo and Greenbelt (Flevo in Holland, and Greenbelt in England). We hope to do some club dates over there as well. We were fortunate enough to do some touring with Bob Dylan... some dates in Wisconsin and Iowa. And we hit Chicago every so often. We try to get around as much as possible.

ACM: Do you feel that being an unsigned band gives you some additional freedom, or do you find it has some limitations too?

OtR: I suppose the limitations are that you have to do everything yourself. Sometimes



the creative process gets neglected in the interest of business and planning and promotion and so forth. Obviously, artistically, there's really nobody telling us what to do. We do have a publisher, ...a wonderful person. He put up some money for the most recent batch of recordings that we did and we recorded them at a studio in Nashville. Everything prior to that had been done on home-spun gear here in Cincinnati. When it was his dime, so to speak, we did feel a little pressure...that we better have something to show for all of this, because it tends to get expensive quickly when someone is putting you up in hotel rooms, paying for a studio, and flying an engineer in. He doesn't put a lot of artistic parameters on us, so this batch of songs that we're releasing July 1st is pretty diverse. That is one obvious freedom of not being on a label. Stylistically, we are free to pursue virtually anything that our hearts concoct.

ACM: So, up until now, you guys have been eking out a living and working part-time and/or full-time. When I called the other night to arrange a time to talk, you mentioned that you guys pooled your resources in the past to work towards something together.

OtR: Lalways said that if this band didn't fly, i.e. if we don't eventually get signed to a major label and make records that are widely distributed, and so forth... If that doesn't happen, I want to be out on the street, decrepit. I want to know that all my resources and energy went into it. I don't want to live the rest of my life wondering what would have happened if I would have tried harder, or used more of my savings. I mean we've put everything on the line and borrowed a lot of money along the way. Most of it is paid back, but we have a lot of VISA cards, and we think nothing of putting six or eight thousand dollars on VISA to make something happen. We try to count the cost, and put everything we can muster into it.

ACM: An all or nothing approach... Do you ever get concerned that you may end up on the street yet?

OtR: Well, there is nothing wrong with making a new start. I mean, I'm still relatively young. I have lots of interests. We're going to try very hard to make it work. I feel very good about starting over with nothing. I don't fear it. I feel very good about doing something with all my might.

ACM: How long have you been working together as a band?

OtR: The summer of '89... We got together and started writing material. We recorded about a half dozen songs...the first half of our first cd, Til we have Faces. Karin didn't live in Cincinnati at the time and, over the course of the next year, she relocated down here. Ricand Brian did some touring as side men during that time. Then, in the summer of '90, we finished our cd. In September we started playing clubs around the Midwest. So, it's been about a year and a half now that we've been performing. We played Cornerstone last summer and met a lot of people there. The rest of our performing takes place in your typical college setting on a weekend night. We were kind of concerned whether our music, certainly not party music, would be received well in that context. Actually, we built a fairly large and loyal following over the last year and a half. We have an extensive mailing list, and we've received a considerable amount of airplay across the country here and there. Some commercial stations along with college stations. It's surprising what

ACM: How would you describe your music to someone who hasn't heard it? Is there any particular focus with your lyrics? Any style that you lean towards?

OtR: When we first started the group I thought about the direction a lot, but I don't think we articulated our thoughts too formally to one another. I know some of my concern was that we write songs that could stand on their own, and that were powerful without a lot of elaborate arrangement or flashy playing. I wanted a simplicity and a restraint in the writing. Also, I was interested in the folk approach to lyrics... I liked lyrics that painted very striking and specific images... and told stories. I definitely haven't mastered the art of telling a story in a song. It's a big goal. We definitely wanted to stay away from a lot of the slick pop that was being made in the 80's (with lots of keyboards and sequencing). We wanted a lot of acoustic instruments. This is all extremely boring to the average reader, so I should probably say something more exciting...

ACM: Your last of has a very elaborate of booklet, probably one of the most artistic I've ever seen. Its' very complete, very striking with lots of very interesting illustrations and photographs. It is even packaged in an onion skin cover. What led you to go that far into the booklet?

OtR: I guess, to us, it couldn't have been any other way. We tried to make the cd sound as good as possible, with the equipment that we had to work with...which was very limiting. We took great pains to make it as good as we could. When it comes time to present the band visually, we try to be as creative as we can with the resources that we have. We're very fortunate to know a very gifted artist who's a photographer; his name is Michael Wilson. He's also a bit of a mentor for the band. He has a book that he published himself, with some of his photos and some prose in it. It's a beautiful book, and I find his work so moving. I was just thrilled to be able to associate it as much as possible with our music. He's done some photos for some other well-known bands. He did the All Shook Down cover for The Replacements, and he did the last BoDeans album. He did the last Lyle Lovett booklet... the photography for the inside of Lovett's Joshua, Judges, Ruth album which was recently released... I don't know if elaborate is the right word...we tried to make something beautiful. I think the



philosophy of the band has always been to go the extra mile in anything we do, and to try to not leave well enough alone, but go the extra step.

ACM: So, every aspect of what you do, you do the best you possibly can, then take it a step further.

OtR: That's probably accurate...we try.

ACM: Just looking back through some of my notes... I would like to know where the name Over the Rhose came from.

OtR: I was always a small town boy. Most of us were raised in rural settings. Ric and Brian and I had some musical opportunities made available to us, which sort of led us to relocate in Cincinnati (which is not a huge city, there's probably two and a half million people in the greater Cincinnati area). But, for some reason, we ended up living right downtown in a little village called Over the Rhine. When we moved down in '88 or so, it was undoubtedly the seediest neighborhood in Cincinnati...and now it's sort of appalling in its diversity. You have very rich, art gallery types driving their Jaguars, and then you have the couple of stoned panhandlers with their collective grocery cart hitting people up for change so they can make it through one more night. There are a lot of artists in the neighborhood...an old German neighborhood, most of the buildings are 100-150 years old. It's really...especially when we first moved here...just an artist's dream environment, because it was so full of imagery. Most of the songs that we originally wrote for the band were written in my third story bedroom overlooking the activity on Main Street. We didn't have a name, and we tried the name on...it was a perfect fit. We just adopted the name of our neighborhood.

ACM: So, it just happened.

OtR: When we leave Cincinnati, we get a lot of positive feedback on the name. People just assume we're from Europe or something. Here in Cincinnati, it was initially sort of frowned upon because the area was almost an embarrassment to the city. But now it's such a hip place to live, if we're not careful, we'll be associated with some kind of yupple hangout. But, really, most people aren't familiar with the neighborhood in Cincinnati, so it just conjures up some image of a river or rainbow or something.

ACM: Now, you have a new project... a new cd that's going to be available about the same time that Cornerstone starts this summer. Was that a coincidence in timing, or were you preparing it to take with you?

OtR: I think we timed the release date so Cornerstone would be the first place it would be widely available. The people at Cornerstone were very kind to us and invited us back. They are treating us like a normal band, even though we're unsigned. It's our little way of saying thanks...timing the release so you have to go to Cornerstone to get it initially.

ACM: You mentioned that you're new material is a little more diverse, ...do you feel that it's a stronger project, because of the resources you had this time?

OtR: I definitely don't feel it's a lot stronger. It's a little different, but there again, even though we were in a pretty decent studio this time, it's still very much a rush job. It's not an album project, it's very much a demo project. I don't know why, but it's become sort of a policy to invite people to snoop around in our sketch books, by putting out these demos. I think it's good for us to get feedback from listeners. I guess I should have mentioned that we're using the term album loosely...even the first cd is just a collection of songs that we demoed out, to get a feel for the direction the band was going to take, and there are certainly flaws in this new batch of songs. I read so many writers, Dylan Thomas e.g., (one of my favorite authors) ...in the preface to his famous book Collected Poems he says that if he changed everything he didn't like about the poems in his collection that he'd have no time to write new poems. I sort of feel that way sometimes. When we get a record deal, and it's time to work on a record...hopefully there will be months involved where we can have time to live with the material and capture the sounds of the instruments the way we want to. Even then, I'm sure we won't achieve everything we strive for. Right now, we just don't have the resources to spend a lot of time in the studio. But sometimes, when you're forced

to work quickly, little surprises come up that are not without charm. Hopefully, people will find elements of this collection that they like.

ACM: What would it take for you to be able to take that next step, ...and sign with a company and spend that time in the studio. What would be the carrot to encourage you to let go of all the freedom that you have?

OtR: It wouldn't take a whole lot, if a good major label...and someone with integrity as a person, wanted to sign us. We'd be happy to forego some of the artistic freedom that we enjoy now, in exchange for a company that could distribute us and take some of the business aspect off our hands.

ACM: Is the appeal for a label more to make the product more accessible to the general audience, or is it to free you up more to be artistic and to spend less time on the the business end. What's the pull for you?

OtR: I think when we get a record label, hopefully we will be able to focus more on the music. And, obviously we're concerned about making the music as available as possible to the public, not that everybody has to like it and shoot us up the charts. It's just that we're spending so many hours just to make the band known and get the word out. A major label has all sorts of networking capabilities and distribution systems in place, and they can make that their responsibility to let people know that we exist.

ACM: Is there anything else you could say to describe Over the Rhine?

OtR: I always am surprised that people tolerate the idea of one more band. Do you ever feel that there are too many bands trying to make it? Like, enough already...I don't want to hear about the next band that has to get signed to a record label. Sometimes I just feel a little self-conscious...I want to be in a band too. I ask myself, why does the world need one more band? It started out for me that I felt I had something I wanted to say. It's been a couple of years now,...it's been pretty hard work. I think that artists start out wanting to express themselves, and they clamor and clamor, and fight and claw for the opportunity to finally stand up on a soap box and say their piece, and by the time they

do get everbody's attention, they can't remember what it is that they wanted to say anymore. I feel that way sometimes. We work so hard to gain the audience, and get airplay, and get the stuff distributed in stores, and we're working very hard for a platform. I hope that when we get there, that there is still something meaningful within us that needs to be said, ... make it worth it. It's fun to take our brand of music into an alternative bar. And we try to write poetic lyrics, and a lot of them deal with fairly serious issues of spirituality, and the difficulty of maintaining meaningful relationships, and the difficulties of survival in our materialistic culture. A lot of the times I feel the big percentage of organized religion is sort of missing some of the innuendos and subtleties of what Jesus taught. These are the sort of things we are discussing in our songs...in the context of alternative clubs and bars across the Midwest and elsewhere. It feels good too. A lot of people were skeptical that 'alternative' people would be into what we are doing, because we come across as caring about what we do, and that's sort of ... very uncool. It's much cooler to be detached and above it all, and distant. Anyway, it can be very rewarding in those settings, to see people give the music a chance and be drawn in, and have people say, "I wouldn't normally listen to this, but it's working." Maybe because our songs attempt to be somewhat literate in their approach, we tend to meet some fairly intelligent people that have a lot to offer us. I've enjoyed meeting some very bright students and so forth, and continue developing a relationship







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