

TALES OF ROCK'N'ROLL DEVIANCE





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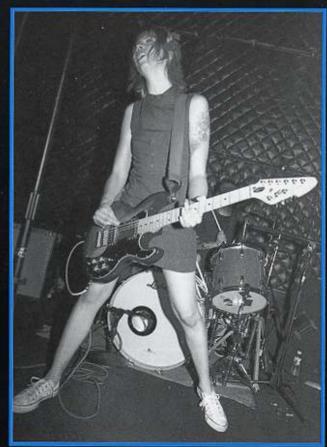


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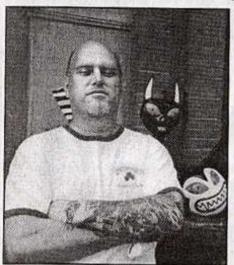
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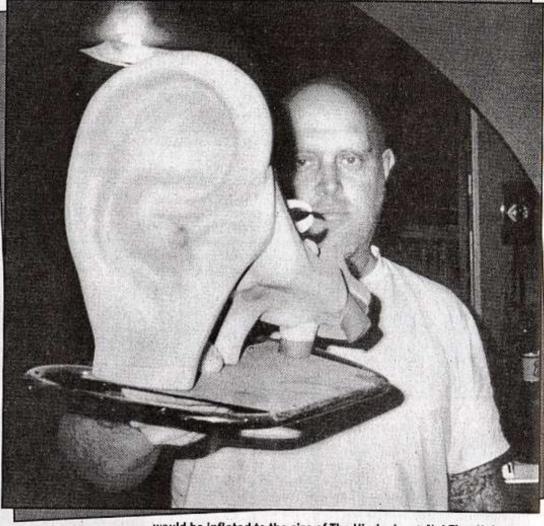
CAN THROW A CHICKEN AT!



bringing the flag with... (big smile) $Tim \ Kerr_{\mbox{\tiny photos by Beth}}$

Tim Kerr is the equivalent to Suburban Voice's Al Quint. He's old enough, has paid more than his share of dues, and has been doing his thing continuously for so long, he has every right to be a complete fucking bastard. Or a jaded prick. Or a charity case. But he's not. He's the opposite. He's still excited. He's still on top of his game. Here's a guy who was an awesome, influential guitar player in the Big Boys - one of the rightfully heralded, truly original punk bands that shrugged off boundaries, took cues from funk, soul, and hardcore, and made some of the best albums of the '80s. Standing tall much like the Minutemen's catalog almost twenty years down the road, those records are still vital. The Big Boys' one-two-three punch of The Skinny





I went up to the microphone and said man, I'm not drunk, I'm from Texas!

Elvis, The Fat Elvis, and Wreck Collection deserve to be in any self-respecting record collection. By all accounts, if Tim stopped there, he'd be a rad dude.

Instead, Tim not only went on to be in more great bands – like the supergroup Monkeywrench and Poison 13 – he began producing bands. Hundreds of bands. People bandy around seemingly simple words like "garage punk" or anything akin to "blues-damaged punk." Tim, in no small way, quietly helped pave that road to be traveled on. If you haven't heard of him, that's fine. He's not in it for the ten-minute hot burn of fame. He's in it because it's his love, his seed that needs constant nurturing. What's really amazing is that with almost anyone else, going along with this long line of praise, their head

would be inflated to the size of The Hindenburg. Not Tim. He's so extremely humble, to the point that people admiring him is a strange concept. I suspect that if I could get an X-ray of Tim's chest and hold it up to the light, his heart would be much bigger than yours or mine. Say hey to one of the best eggs that have committed to the long haul. –Todd

In the first minute or two of meeting Tim, I felt totally at ease, like we had met before, which we had not. When he went back home, at the end of the week it felt like someone in my family was leaving for a long time. To most people, things are "okay." To Tim, things are "pretty fuckin' great!" followed with a (smile) or maybe even a (big smile). If you EVER get the chance to stop and talk to Tim, I highly recommend it. You'll never be the same and you'll have family in Texas. (smile) -Julia

Julia: Name, age and current occupation.

Tim Kerr: Eighteen forever. I do graphic art at the library.

Julia: Were you born and raised in Texas?

Tim: Hell yeah!

Julia: Would you or could you ever not live in Texas?

Tim: Ummm, no, I'll tell you why. We have been talking about this lately. We almost moved to Seattle one time in the '90s. Me and Beth (Tim's wife), before any of this music stuff ever got started, had talked about moving to California. At this point now, as

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crazy as this sounds, I'm really pretty got a twin." "Yeah, I taught him geography out stuff that isn't given to you on that

fuckin' proud I'm from Texas. It's hard to explain to people; it's not a Southern thing. There's a real distinct thing in Texas where the people are just a whole lot more open and bands are usually a lot crazier and kinda stick out like sore thumbs, for better or for worse, wherever they go. And the history of it - everything from Ornette Coleman to Thirteenth Floor Elevators it's kinda cool being from there, ya know? Beth found this cartoon and it was a little boy and his dad and another guy. The little boy says to the other guy, "Hi, where are you from?" and the dad says to the son, "Son, don't ask the man where he's from. If he's from Texas he'll tell you and if he's not, don't embarrass him."

I told you that story when we (The Monkeywrench) were in Spain... I had snapped the neck on my guitar on the first song and I had gone through three amplifiers by the time we had got to the start of the third song, so they were all rushin' back there to try to fix my amps, and Tom went up to the microphone and said, "Oh, don't mind Tim. He's drunk," So I went up to the microphone and said, "Man, I'm not drunk. I'm from Texas!" and the whole place went crazy.

Julia: Name a Texas hardcore band that never got its due.

Tim: The Marching Plague from San Antonio, TX were pretty fuckin' great. There's a lot of bands; that's a really hard question. It was such an unbelievable community back then. It was even a community between states. It was just this big family and you never really wanted to leave anybody out. When you look at records from back then, there's always this huge "thank you" list 'cause nobody wanted to leave anyone out.

Julia: What did your parents do?

Tim: My dad was an elementary school principal and my mom was an elementary school librarian at two totally different schools and both my brothers were coaches. I think my dad really liked my involvement with music and art because, although I played sports around the neighborhood, I didn't really care for school sports. I think he was happy that one of his boys was more into art and music and things like that, so they were pretty supportive. When PBS first came on, it was the only other weird channel. They would have bands on there all the time. My dad and me would watch these shows. Johnny Winter was on one time with Tom Waits and this is way back. My dad comes in and is like, "I know that guy." I was like, "huh?" "Doesn't he have a brother?" "Yeah, he's

in Beaumont." I thought, "You're cool dad."

radio, that you found out about on your own, if that's in you already it seems to me

There are so many people punk rock stopped in 177, F86k stopped in 1982, punk stopped with this... there's they don't listen

Julia: When did you first start playing music?

Tim: I started playing guitar and piano in elementary school. The British Invasion had a lot to do with it. My brothers are ten and eight years older than me. One of them was totally into soul music and one of them was totally into Hank Williams and stuff like that, which I didn't like at the time, but now I do. Every time I can ever remember being in a car with the radio on. I heard their music, up until the Beatles. When that all happened, that was kinda like my music.

Julia: Do you even know how many bands you've been in?

Tim: [laughter] Ummm, I can sit and start countin'. It's not that many. Big Boys was the first. During Big Boys there was this band - it was one summer where everybody that was in bands at home were all in other bands just for the summer - and I was in this band called the Court Reporters. The Court Reporters were a total Gang of Four sound, a three piece, and that's where "Jump the Fence" came from. The Court Reporters were Chris Gates' all time favorite band, hands down. We played, maybe three shows and Chris taped them all. If you get Wreck Collection on CD, there's a hidden track at the end and it's Court Reporters doing "Jump the Fence" from a show that Chris had taped. So that's two.

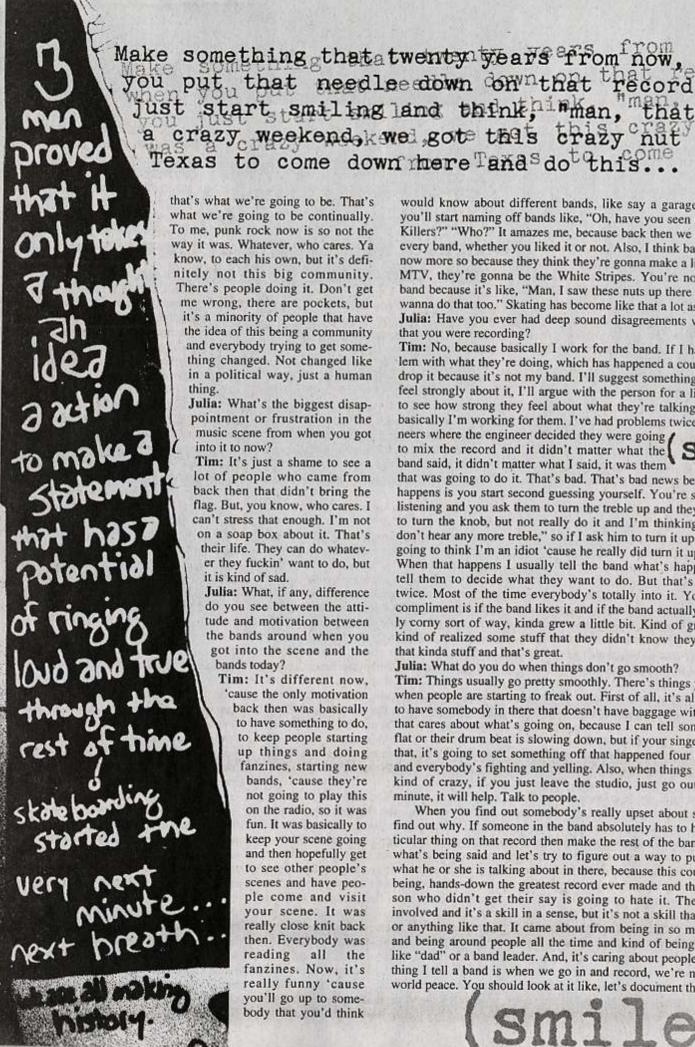
Poison 13, Bad Mutha Goose, Monkeywrench - the first Monkeywrench, Jack O' Fire and sometime during Jack O' Fire was this thing called Fistfight. The more people you can plant seeds with or get inspired - that sounds really corny because it sounds like I'm trying to inspire people - but it's not that thought out. I just do what I do and if that action causes someone else to get up and do something, then I am overjoyed and overwhelmed. There is still so much to learn, see and do.

I think we talked about this at the studio, about what makes you stop. It's the weirdest thing to me that you have the seed in your head to begin with, you're seeking

like that would just keep growing until you're dead because there's so much more stuff to hear and so much more stuff to see. There's so much more stuff to be surprised about. There are so many people who say, "Punk rock stopped in '77," "Punk rock stopped in 1982," "Punk rock stopped with this..." There's a day and they don't listen anymore. They think they're listening, but they ain't listening at all 'cause they compare everything now to that and don't just take it as it's something different.

With that in mind, that's what bothers me, too, when you get into these kind of interviews. I can't stress enough I'm totally proud of all this stuff. I'm amazed that we're sitting here right now doing this interview. I was amazed when Razorcake was sending me magazines. I figured they thought I was Tim Kerr Records. I'm totally proud of all this stuff. I don't mind talking about it with people. I think it's really great, but it really, really bothers me that there are so many people that that's (back then) the best thing that ever happened. It's horrible to say, but man, kill yourself, ya know? I don't even understand what you think you should live for if you think you've already missed it. And now you're living for these bands to have these reunions so that you can go back? Most people, when they go to reunions think that's what it was like, and it wasn't at all! Julia: What do you see as the biggest improvement in the music scene from when you got into it to now?

Tim: I'm not sure there's any improvement. [laughter] I guess it's cool that there are so many people aware of all the stuff that happened. That's pretty great, 'cause anytime anyone's hearing something new, that's wonderful. As far as people taking the ball and running with it or bringing the flag, which is what I always say, there's not a lot of people that brought that flag. It's a totally different ballgame now. I was talking about this with somebody the other day, I can't remember who it was, about the whole label thing. I'm whatever they call it next. Whatever they call it next,



that's what we're going to be. That's what we're going to be continually. To me, punk rock now is so not the way it was. Whatever, who cares. Ya know, to each his own, but it's definitely not this big community. There's people doing it. Don't get me wrong, there are pockets, but it's a minority of people that have the idea of this being a community and everybody trying to get something changed. Not changed like

Julia: What's the biggest disappointment or frustration in the music scene from when you got into it to now?

Tim: It's just a shame to see a lot of people who came from back then that didn't bring the flag. But, you know, who cares. I can't stress that enough. I'm not on a soap box about it. That's their life. They can do whatever they fuckin' want to do, but it is kind of sad.

Julia: What, if any, difference do you see between the attitude and motivation between the bands around when you got into the scene and the bands today?

Tim: It's different now, cause the only motivation back then was basically to have something to do, to keep people starting up things and doing fanzines, starting new bands, 'cause they're not going to play this on the radio, so it was fun. It was basically to keep your scene going and then hopefully get to see other people's scenes and have people come and visit your scene. It was really close knit back then. Everybody was all the reading fanzines. Now, it's really funny 'cause you'll go up to somebody that you'd think

would know about different bands, like say a garage band, and you'll start naming off bands like, "Oh, have you seen Lee County Killers?" "Who?" It amazes me, because back then we knew about every band, whether you liked it or not. Also, I think bands start up now more so because they think they're gonna make a living, be on MTV, they're gonna be the White Stripes. You're not starting a band because it's like, "Man, I saw these nuts up there last night, I wanna do that too." Skating has become like that a lot as well.

Julia: Have you ever had deep sound disagreements with a band that you were recording?

Tim: No, because basically I work for the band. If I have a problem with what they're doing, which has happened a couple times, I drop it because it's not my band. I'll suggest something. If I really feel strongly about it, I'll argue with the person for a little bit just to see how strong they feel about what they're talking about, but basically I'm working for them. I've had problems twice with engi-

neers where the engineer decided they were going to mix the record and it didn't matter what the band said, it didn't matter what I said, it was them

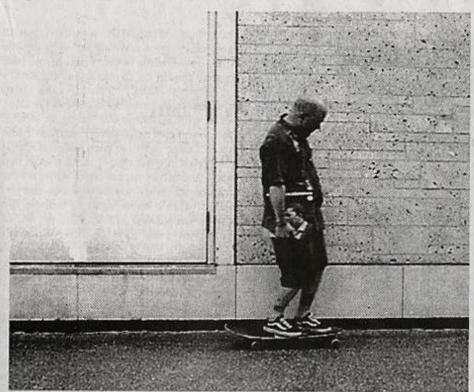
that was going to do it. That's bad. That's bad news because what happens is you start second guessing yourself. You're sitting there listening and you ask them to turn the treble up and they'll pretend to turn the knob, but not really do it and I'm thinking, "Okay, I don't hear any more treble," so if I ask him to turn it up more is he going to think I'm an idiot 'cause he really did turn it up, or what? When that happens I usually tell the band what's happening and tell them to decide what they want to do. But that's only been twice. Most of the time everybody's totally into it. Your biggest compliment is if the band likes it and if the band actually, in a really corny sort of way, kinda grew a little bit. Kind of grew closer, kind of realized some stuff that they didn't know they could do, that kinda stuff and that's great.

Julia: What do you do when things don't go smooth?

Tim: Things usually go pretty smoothly. There's things you can do when people are starting to freak out. First of all, it's always good to have somebody in there that doesn't have baggage with the band that cares about what's going on, because I can tell someone he's flat or their drum beat is slowing down, but if your singer tells you that, it's going to set something off that happened four shows ago and everybody's fighting and yelling. Also, when things are getting kind of crazy, if you just leave the studio, just go outside for a

minute, it will help. Talk to people.

When you find out somebody's really upset about something, find out why. If someone in the band absolutely has to have a particular thing on that record then make the rest of the band listen to what's being said and let's try to figure out a way to put some of what he or she is talking about in there, because this could end up being, hands-down the greatest record ever made and the one person who didn't get their say is going to hate it. There's a lot involved and it's a skill in a sense, but it's not a skill that I studied or anything like that. It came about from being in so many bands and being around people all the time and kind of being looked at like "dad" or a band leader. And, it's caring about people. The first thing I tell a band is when we go in and record, we're not solving world peace. You should look at it like, let's document this point in



time. How we got to here, why we started this with this group of friends. We may not be in here tomorrow, somebody may die, as horrible as that sounds, but it can happen. Make something that twenty years from now, when you put that needle down on that record, you just start smiling and think, "Man, that was a crazy weekend. We got this crazy nut from Texas to come down here and do this.'

Julia: Have you ever mic'd a smile vibra slap? big

Tim: That was my pet peeve up until this year. This year, for some reason, somebody hit one and I didn't cringe. It's a long story. We did an instrumental in the Big Boys, I think it was an instrumental, I don't even remember now at this point, but Biscuit (the lead singer of the Big Boys) started playing a vibra slap on stage. He started making such a complete overblown, ridiculous production of playing that thing that it got to where I didn't want to hear it anymore. So now, when I hear that sound, it kind of takes me back to that.

Julia: Could you tell me how you ended up on guitar and Chris ended up on bass.

Tim: Flipped a coin. We were skating and we were talking about starting this band up and getting Biscuit to sing, 'cause we knew he sang. We both (Chris and I) played guitar so we flipped a coin to see who was going to play bass.

Julia: What did Biscuit's sweat smell like?

Tim: Baloney sandwiches, He did this show one time where he had sandwiches in baggies safety pinned all over this jumpsuit he had on. During the show, he's throwing the sandwiches out to the crowd. I swear to god, it had to have been at least a year later, we were at this big show and somebody throws one of those sandwiches up on stage, in the baggy and everything. So Biscuit takes it out, puts it under his arm and sings most of the set with this sandwich under his arm. Then, at some point, he pulls it out and eats it.

The best gross out story is in San Francisco. Big Boys had played there and here come the Dicks. Jello Biafra pulls Gary (the lead singer of the Dicks) aside and tells him, "You know, you really probably better not wear that nurse's uniform, because when the Big Boys were here, the singer wore a dress and people gave them a bunch of shit." Gary went out there anyway and some kid spit a big right on his cheek. Gary went right to the front row, where the kid was, and eats it. The whole front row stepped back. Texas!

true people used to slight the Red Hot

by calling them the "Small Boys," as a reference to not being as

Tim: Oh, I don't know about that. The very first time we ever saw the Chili Peppers, they were really amazing. It was total James Brown. It had no rock in it. It didn't have any kind of funky rock, funky punk. It was straight-up James Brown. Me and Chris got into an argument that night because I was going, "This is great. They call us funk? We need to start playing more James Brown type stuff," and Chris was saying, "That's not funk. The Ohio Players are funk." We ended up getting into an argument about James Brown and the Ohio Players. The first time we played with them, they did a Big Boys rap. It was weird, because every time I saw them after that they got progressively more funky punk, funky rock. There were other bands - Gang of Four was pretty funky sounding. There were a lot of bands doing something other than the straight-up Sex Pistols sound. There was that band here that was so great, Black Randy and the Metrosquad.

Julia: Could you clarify the whole Bad Brains coming to Texas and not digging the homosexuals story.

Tim: Okay, first of all, Biscuit never really... being gay was not an issue. He was gay. We all knew he was gay. We had friends that were gay. We didn't have songs about it. He didn't announce it on

> stage - not because he was hiding it - it just wasn't an issue. Nobody cared. So here come Bad Brains. They stayed at our house. To this day, they were probably one of the better bands I ever saw. They were **RAZORCAKE 67**

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Chili Peppers good as the Big Boys?

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fuckin' amazing live! The Bad Brains came to the house. At the time, I was getting ready to do an art show so there were a lot of pieces around, and I had this thing called the Voodoo Box in the house. It was this altar kind of thing. They covered that up with a sheet because of their religion. I thought it was kinda funny, but no big deal. I didn't know anything about Rastafarian at the time. I do now, and I also realize now, that they weren't Rastafarian. They were the American version of "people that saw Bob Marley and decided they were going to be Rastafarian." A real Rastafarian is "to each his own." They don't agree with homosexuality or things like that, BUT "to each his own.

There was also a poster in our bathroom that Biscuit had done for one of our shows and it shut the punk rock club here - Raul's - down, so originals of this poster were kind

of a big deal here in Austin. It was this naked guy standing with a cowboy hat on and a big dick hanging down and it said, "Hot and bothered young men at Raul's, Dicks, Insert, Big Boys." Those were the three bands playing. It got the club shut down

because the T.A.B.C. (Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission) thought there was going to be nude people, and sex acts at the show. It was a big fuckin' deal when it happened and it scared us when it happened because we thought, "We haven't been together

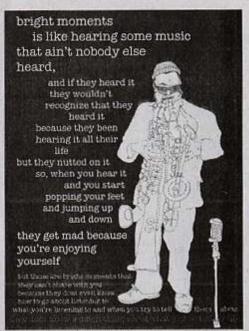
that long and we've already shut the place down."

Now, Spot (producer of many Black Flag, Hüsker Dü, and Descendents records) had just been staying at our house recording and had just left to go back to LA. I went into the bathroom and there's a piece of toilet paper stuck over the guy's dick. I thought Spot did it just kiddin' around, so I took the paper off. Didn't think anything of it. Go to the show. Bad Brains didn't see the Dicks 'cause they'd already seen pictures of Gary Floyd in that nurse's outfit. They watched Big Boys, and after we played, they were all hugging us and asking if all those people always come up on stage and sing along, going on and on and on. H.R. hugged Biscuit. I was standing right there. I saw HR step back like something was on his mind or an afterthought. Then H.R. asked Biscuit, "Are you gay?" and Biscuit said "Yeah." H.R. stepped back and just started yelling, "This is Babylon. This truly is Babylon. San Francisco's not Babylon. This is Babylon!" Screaming.

Both people screaming, that's the first part of "Brick Wall," because it was like two brick walls yelling at other. For awhile Biscuit was kind of yelling back, defending himself, which was stupid because, [Tim puts two fists together] "brick wall." Then, the greatest thing Biscuit did realizing what was going on - H.R.'s yelling, "This is Babylon" and Biscuit just looked H.R. right in the eye and goes, "Yeah, and I'm the Devil." Now, Biscuit had sold them "something" Rastafarians love, even after all accusations, that they were suppose to leave money with me for. Needless to say, the rest of the night was a little awkward back at the house. The next day I go to work and Beth is at home. Beth is a really, really great, great person, who doesn't get that upset about things. She calls me up crying and I have to come home from work 'cause

something's going on.

Now, we have to backup for a second. Before the Bad Brains came to Austin, David MDC had called us from San Francisco to set the show up and none of us knew who Bad Brains were -Biscuit knew but the rest of us didn't know anything RAZORCAKE 68



"There's good people; there's bad people, good people don't do that shit:

about them. When MDC was touring with them, they started realizing the unbelievable stuff Bad Brains were preaching, like women should be barefoot having babies and they told MDC, "You guys are great. Why don't you come back to New York and record with us, but you're going to need to change some of your lyrics," and stuff like that. So, once again, to each his own. David was a nice guy but one of those people that would just bend your ear about whatever the lyrics he was singing were or issues and you kind of didn't know what to believe. So when he called and told us, "Oh, no, we've got to change this. Stop the show. You don't know what's going on. They're making us change our lyrics," we just took it as David, you know? Like, was it really that bad? We all learned later that it was that bad.

So I come home from work and MDC is on one side of our sidewalk and the Bad

> Brains are on the other side of the sidewalk, yelling at the top of their lungs at each other. That's the next part of "Brick Wall." I walk inside, and I will always have this in

my mind, this picture, because I guarantee you, THAT was when the Bad Brains broke up and were never the same. Right at that point at that minute, because Earl, H.R.'s brother, the drummer, was sitting in a chair and looked up at me and was shaking his head saying, "Tim, I'm sorry," obviously questioning what was going on. I walked back and saw Beth and we talked for a second, Now I'm shaking inside because it's, like, something's got to happen here and I guess it's gotta be me that does this. So I go outside and I basically stand in the middle of them and said, "If you guys want to yell, go to your house." I was pointing at David. "Because this is my house and I don't wanna hear this stuff, so either go to your house and yell or shut up." So they were leaving. The Bad Brains had a show in Houston and H.R. didn't have a bed, so we gave him a rolled-up foam bed to take with him. Still, we're being nice with them, and they are leaving. Now I swear I saw this. When they were all leaving, H.R. went up to Beth and said, "Don't worry about Tim. We'll pray for him." Beth lost it and told him, "Get the FUCK out of my house!" over and over and backed him up out of the house. So they're gone.

Now we start seeing some things wrong around the house I had a picture of the Pope that I was using in this painting for my upcoming show, that had the words "No more Heroes," but now the picture is gone. The poster in the bathroom that shut Raul's down, now has a band aid stuck over the guy's dick so that the only way you can get it off is to tear the poster. All they had to do was come up to me and say they were offended by these things and I would have taken it down or covered it. Instead, they fuck it up or steal it. They gave me an envelope that felt weighted, like money inside, addressed to Biscuit. I'm not going to open it because it's addressed to him. Biscuit comes and gets it. There's a bunch of crumpled up paper in it, no money, and one little note that says, "May you burn it hell. -Bad Brains.

Okay, now the part that nobody has ever quite understood or gotten, except for people back then, is that us, Big Boys, as a band, the most important thing we had an issue with the Bad Brains was not any of the gay issues or anything like that. It was just basically, "You just fucked over somebody because you were supposed to

give them this much money and you didn't do it. There's good

people. There's bad people. Good people don't do that shit. You owe Biscuit this much money, period." You also don't come into someone else's house and fuck with or steal things you do not

agree with. That's where we were coming from.

That was the summer that MDC toured and got big. They went all over the United States. They sat, just like I'm sitting here with you, and went through all these interviews and told everybody about their gay friends that got fucked over by the Bad Brains. Which, fine, that's great... but it was amazing. We started getting this mail that was either like, "Man, we really support the gays and stuff and you can come to our town anytime at all," or it was like, "If you fucking faggots ever come to this town, we're going to, blah, blah." It was amazing shit – because of MDC's interviews – when all we had a problem with was mainly the money and stealing issue. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure we had a problem with the whole gay deal, and a lot of what they were spouting out, but in general our biggest thing was the money. In my mind, though I agreed with a lot of what MDC was saying in those inter-

views, they were also just as bad as the Bad Brains because they were coming off like, the Bad Brains believe this and that's wrong! You should believe this. This is the right point of view. When the Bad Brains got to Houston, their tires got slit because word was already out. They were supposed to go to Dallas and the club called and wanted to know how much money it was that they owed Biscuit. They were going to take it out of their money and send it to us. I told the club that Bad Brains needed to pay us on their own. Thank you, but no. Eventually, probably because of all the shit they were getting, they did send us the money, but it was their roadie/ sound guy that did this. They didn't come back to Texas for a long time.

Julia: Why - and I admire you for it - won't

the Big Boys do a reunion show?

Tim: Because the Big Boys were part of the show. The crowd was the other part. The crowd is ABSOLUTELY not the same now. The crowd that's coming now is coming to be entertained. It's a show, like going to a rock show now. It was absolutely not like that back then. We could be better, who knows, but it ain't us. I don't want people coming – which I've seen happen, at shows where a kid will come up to me – going, "Man, that was great. I saw 'em!" You didn't see them. Yeah, you saw 'em and it was kinda cool, but, I'm sorry, you DID NOT see what it was like back then, the community of it.

Julia: Do you have any advice - like, how do you approach what you do as opposed to fifteen years ago? Do you think you've mellowed out or do you just have a natural, nice

way with of dealing with people?

Tim: I don't really approach it that differently. I think I probably don't argue as much. I don't feel like I have to prove anything to anybody. Religion's like that a lot where you have some Jesus freak that's really telling me all about Jesus and you can kind of tell it's because they're not really sure about it either. I don't think I've really mellowed out. I think I'm just more open. I never really shut myself off. I try to be aware of people and what's going on. Even in a case, like the Bad Brains scenario, you learn something. You either

learn something about yourself, you learn something about life, or you learn something. People say that I'm nice, but I think that's Texas.

Julia: Yeah, the first time I was introduced to you, you gave me a hug.

Tim: That's just being a human being. We wouldn't be sitting here and be family. This would be one of those kind of interviews.

Julia: If there was any pair of shoes in this world you could have what would they be?

Tim: Brown winos and a new one now. There's brand new green Alvas that they only made in Japan. They totally look like the old school Vans with the stripe, like the ones Ian (MacKaye) used to wear, but these are green and they're fuckin' amazing looking. You can't get 'em here. You can only get them in Japan.

Julia: What size? Tim: Size eight.

big smile)



