



OPM

Half Pipes and Poppy Seeds

Christian W. Cipollini

Southern California is a hotbed of cultural integration; OPM is one of the best at cultivating the various sounds and vibes of the giant melting pot known as L.A. With the band's summer releases of both an EP and full-length, frontman John E. Necro talks about their natural musical progression, from the pipe to the poppy.

"On a major label, you can have a shitty song and they can make it a hit," Necro says, "Or you can have a hit but it doesn't always work out." With the release of debut album *Menace to Sobriety* in 2000, OPM unleashed the catchy skate rock anthem "Heaven is a Half Pipe." While cool and memorable in and of itself, the single was essentially the beginning of an end with the corporate music machine. As John puts it, "There's always conflict and drama, it consumes so much energy, and they don't even realize how much it inhibits artists." With little promotional backing on top of that, OPM was going nowhere. So they moved to Suburban Noize Records, the independent powerhouse of subculture sensibility.

Noting that the first album was completely programmed, sans having played the music as a band per se, John says of releasing their sophomore effort, "By ForThemAsses, we added a lot more of the live elements from having touring experience now under our belt." Becoming a more traditional band with a catalog of eclectic tunes that embody the best elements of reggae, hip hop, rock and punk, OPM were poised to show the world how their music has evolved even further.

"The arrangements are more complex and the transitions between parts evolved more organically," he says of California Poppy. Necro is confident the latest smoky grooves to rise from the den will again capture the essence of a Cali lifestyle--done the OPM way. "We produced this album ourselves vs. like in the past with a lot of other people involved. It's a really good representation of where we are as a band."



GOOD RIDDANCE

Power Chords, Energy, and the Big Picture

Boone Stigall

Over the years, Good Riddance's has earned themselves a niche in punk rock circles. Since the early 90s, the Santa Cruz, CA band's high-powered sound and placement in snow and skateboard videos gained them a following. It's a long way from starting out mostly playing covers.

"We wanted to be somewhat serious about having a band as far as playing outside our hometown and writing a lot more original songs," explains vocalist Russ Rankin.

From their 1995 debut album, *For God and Country*, Good Riddance have blazed a sonic trail of melodic, intensity fueled songs that have tackled a number of topics ranging from personal songs ("Not With Him") to examinations of the society around us ("The Dubious Glow Of Excess") to not learning from one's mistakes ("Yesterday's Headlines") and beyond. While their willingness to explore a variety of topics is noticeable, the band's tendency for more personal songs has also garnered criticism from those expecting a solely political band.

"We get a lot of [criticism about] that but there's nothing we can do about it," says Rankin, "We write the songs that we write."

Good Riddance have a lot of things happening in 2006. Their new album, *My Republic*, which Rankin claims is "more mood driven" though still sounds like "a classic punk record" should be out as you read this. In addition, the band will be spending 2006 with other projects as well as touring places such as Australia and parts of the U.S. and Canada, along with band members' outside projects. With a lot of things on the band's plate, Rankin's feelings towards the band's new material is obvious.

"We want to make sure we can play these songs to people in as many places as we can."