

BLANKS 77

There seems to be a resurgence of "old school punk". Both musically and in manner of dress. It never really died, or went away, it just seems to be raising it's head a little higher these days. From the "streets" all the way to the highly visible Rancid and Total Chaos. Closer to home, NJ seems to be the capital of punk in the US. Go figure. Armen of the Wretched Ones and his record label, Headache Records, have been at it for a long time, releasing great oi, or punk or whatever you want to call it. Pennsylvania has it's share of punks too. From the Lehigh Valley's Vile Horrendous to Pittsburgh's many bands including Submachine and Aus-Rotten. Don't forget Violent Society either. Pogo Punk Records (c/o MIKE Pogo 1303 Myrtle Street, Hillside NJ 07205 - also the Blanks 77 address) has just released a 12 band compilation "Pogo Attack", which should be looked at as the "Punk and Disorderly" of the US, or at least the Northeast, for the 90s. It features two songs by each band, from NY (The Casualties, Distraught, 86'd), NJ (Banner of Hope, Blanks 77, Wretched Ones, Dysfunctional Youth, The Bristles), PA (Aus Rotten) and CT (The Pist, Mankind, Vomit Punks). I recommend it highly! The following is an interview with the NJ punk band the Blanks 77. Present were vocalist Mike and later on, drummer Chad. Renee plays guitar and Tim plays bass.

FOE When did the band actually start.

MIKE The summer of 90.

FOE Ok, Thanks, that's all I wanted to ask.

MIKE Thank you....

FOE What is your favorite pudding...

MIKE Today it is strawberry pudding. I feel the need to pluck off the tops of strawberries and dive right in.

FOE What is the favorite brand.

MIKE Jell-o. You've got to stick with the almighty Cos.

FOE Why do you think there is this resurgence in "punk" (you know, spiky hair and leather and stuff) in the underground scene, lately? Especially on the East Coast, enough to put out a record like "Pogo Attack".

MIKE There really always was. It's just getting popular. Look at Green Day.

FOE But that is different. This is at a different level, don't you think? None of these people (referring to a show with Violent Society, Blanks 77 and Submachine) would be seen at a Green Day show?

MIKE Some of them would, I bet ya. I wouldn't, but some of them would.

FOE Is there a difference between bands like Total Chaos and Rancid and what is going on here?

MIKE If Rancid wasn't Rancid and they played, they would do really well with this crowd, but since they are Rancid, I don't know. I like the "Radio Radio Radio" single they put out, but their album sucks. If they put out more songs like their single... I tried to see them twice, and both times they were sold out.

That's not a good incentive for me to go see them again. I can't see them. I don't have time to get there at three, after school. Bands have to decide whether they want to play to the school kids or to the 18 and up crowd. As for the Blanks, I think we'd rather play to the 18 and up. I want the kids to hear us. But I don't want them there, because we might want to get dirty.

FOE I remember the first time I saw you at City Gardens, that was weird.

MIKE We will never play there again. Because the Blanks, as a band went there to see the Dickies with the Meatmen and Gwar, and we got thrown out.

FOE As a band?

MIKE Pretty much.

FOE For what?

MIKE Beating up a bouncer.

FOE Was it fun?

MIKE I didn't even know I hit him. We were fucked up on vodka. We didn't really hurt him. They just threw us out and we caused



a stink and we'll never go there or play there again. So asta la vista. Who cares. Next question.

FOE What do you think about the separatism in the underground scenes?

(at this time some random guy -SRG- comes up and interrupts, I've included it here)

SRG Oi, oi, oi...

MIKE You go. Hey I'm working with CNN over here ok.

SRG Is (unintelligible) here?

MIKE No he's off. He's doing heroin.

SRG Really?

MIKE Yeah yeah, you got to watch out for those guys. Spiky haired punk rockers doing heroin.

SRG How come you guys aren't playing with the Business and Anti-Heroes?

MIKE Cuz we're playing tonite.

SRG No no no, on April 10th.

MIKE We ain't got no time. We ain't got no time to play for free. They couldn't pay us enough to play.

SRG I understand man...

MIKE Ok, back to reality. There is separatism. When I first got into the whole shit, it was kind of a hardcore punk thing. I don't know what happened but people are just like.. you know what it is... I don't know why.... Why do kids... Maybe it's kind of like this, you know how you watch tv and you see like older people who go to work, do their job and they come home, drink a beer, right, and they watch tv. Then on the weekend they do their thing. Maybe it is like that. It's like the kids, they go to school, go to the record store, they don't have time to check out everything, they only have time to check out one particular thing, and they keep checking out that same particular thing.. it's safe, they want to be safe. It is good to be safe, but how safe can you be. I mean, find your calling and all, but like, a lot of kids are like, hardcore style, or Rancid and Top 40 punk rock, or others are just underground punk rock. And that tells you that there really is no big uniting force in the scene. I see that for NJ and NY, I'm sure it is probably the same for PA. But that hippy shit, that can go. I did go to a show the other nite for a friend, he's in an alternative band, and a hardcore band played, and I was listening to this band and I just wanted to mosh. Not that I really liked their music, I just wanted to have fun. Because you can dance to that and have a great time. But still, I really wanted to dance and I couldn't and that's the end of the story. And you go.

FOE How much should the Blanks 77 be paid to do a show?

MIKE At least 200 bucks a night, plus a case of beer.

ARG (Another random guy) You go.

MIKE You fucking go... 200 bucks, a case of beer and some speed. We'd be set.

FOE How much do you usually get paid?

MIKE Twenty bucks, no beer, no speed. Get sent home, don't even have a party afterwards.

FOE How do you feel after a night like that? Does that matter?

MIKE It doesn't matter as long as we're having fun at the show.

We usually save all of our fun for the show. It's not like we're rock stars. We work. This is not our job.

FOE What are your jobs?

MIKE I work at a yogurt store, Chad works at a gas station, Tim works at Shop Rite, and Renee does nothing. Playing is for fun. We drink and we fuck up and we don't really care if no one likes it, we're just playing for fun. We're not trying to impress nobody, that is for sure.

FOE Do you have copies of every record you've released? And how many have you released?

MIKE Yeah, I do. Including tapes it's up to about 13 different things.

FOE How'd the picture disk come about?

MIKE Armen from Headache Records asked us, what do we want to do. He wanted to do something for the Blanks. He wanted to do something cool. And he mentioned the picture disk and we were like right away, yes, it has to be a picture disk. Some people were bitching us out though. Fuck them. It looks really cool, and everyone wants it, and it only has two songs on it but they sound great. If any other band would put one out, I would want theirs too. Because it is cool. I like that whole memorabilia bull shit. There isn't going to be a million of them. Here comes Chad the drummer.

CHAD I'm Ten Seconds, He Who Can Not Play Bass is on bass, Speed Demon is on guitar, and that is Crash Helmet Mike.

FOE Shane (Shane puts out the Lehigh Valley zine Dead Scene Zine, and went on tour with the Blanks77 and wrote up a tour diary in his last issue) told me to ask this question... How did Renee end up in the band?

MIKE Hey, how do you think she ended up in the band! Whoaa! Next question!

CHAD She was a stripper...

MIKE She blew the drummer...

CHAD No, she was a stripper, at Frank's Chicken house in Manville NJ. And we all went up, me, Mike, at the time it was Brendan (ex bassist), Ten Seconds, Crash Helmet. At the time she was stripping to buy her amplifiers and guitars and everything. She was telling us that she wanted to be in a punk rock band. (Ajax also told me her brother played in US Chaos) and that is how we met up with her.

MIKE She got two guys full of equipment, more than she can handle, and we didn't tip her... You go.

FOE What is up with all this "you go" stuff?

CHAD I don't know, I just picked it up from these guys. Actually the truth is that it is from this girl Mike used to work with, Gail, and she just started saying it..

MIKE You go girl.

CHAD You go girl.

MIKE That's Ricki Lake, "You go girl".

FOE Stupid question, why the name Blanks 77.

MIKE (In a highly disappointed voice) Ohhhh mannnnn.

CHAD Ok, originally we were called The Blanks, cause we're blank minded, we're a bunch of alcoholics, who can't think of anything but Blanks. Ok.

MIKE It just sounds like a cool punk rock name.

CHAD There was a band from Michigan, who had two cds out and a record and singles and by right they owned the name.

Someone reviewed our demo tape and their record at the same time and a week later we got a letter from the other Blanks, saying that they will sue us... So we figured punk rock started in 1977, our style is based on 1977, so we'll put some numbers on the name, like Sham 69 or whatever.

FOE I'll ask you the same question I just asked Mike, why do you think bands like the Blanks, and the Wretched Ones are getting so much attention lately?

CHAD Because we're all drinking bands, we're about partying, having a good time. We come out, we meet all kinds of people, we don't want the people thinking they can't hang out with us, cuz we're just like them, we're just in a band. We're all just drinking bands, and everyone can get along with us.

MIKE Hey, it's the you go girl.

FOE Imagine that she'd show up now.

MIKE It's fucking incredible.

FOE Are you going out touring again soon?

MIKE We're going to go to Germany, for like two weeks or so. Then a little short upper North East US tour.

CHAD Fuck everyone else.

MIKE We're just going where they want us.

CHAD We want to make a living at this. We don't want to work anymore, we want to drink. We want to play. We all have jobs, and car payments and insurance. We don't want to do that anymore. We just want to make the kids and punkers happy.

MIKE Fuck them if they're not happy.

CHAD If we could make enough money to live, we'd do this forever.

MIKE I plan on breaking the band up when we're like 35. And reorganizing it when we are like 73. Imagine that a 73 year old punk band.

FOE No, make it 77.

CHAD The way we are committed and the way we are friends, the Blanks 77 will never come to an end.

MIKE There is a lot of love in this room....

CHAD Definitely...

MIKE Check out that chick...

FOE I was...

