



Frank **FOE** interviewed **GREG** guitarist/vocalist of the band Ox and editor of the zine Chumpire after a strenuous workout at the FOE gym.

**FOE** So, **GREG** why do you lift weights?

**GREG** To be able to lift bass amps and my Silvertone amp.

**FOE** What is your fixation with Silvertone amps.

**GREG** I bought one for my 24th birthday and it's probably the best distortion sound I've found for myself. Silvertone amps are made by Sears from the 60s and they just have the cleanest brightest sounds. They are American Voxs.

**FOE** What's the current line up of Ox.

**GREG** Tony (ex Jessica, current Kline's Island) on drums, Dug (Burning Ambitions and Kisses & Hugs) on bass, and me. I moved to Emporium (to teach Spanish), then I was going to be moving back to the Lehigh Valley around Thanksgiving of 1992, with songs to record. I went to Mindy Janes studios with Dave Weston (the areas utility punk rock studio musician) to record five songs. That became the "50 dollar piss job" cassette. Then we mutated into several different lineups during the summer of 1993. Then I asked Dug and Tony to play in September of 1993. Which is the current lineup.

**FOE** How'd you come up with the name Ox.

**GREG** Dave and I took a trip to NYC that Thanksgiving night, and Dave saw Lox on the menu, and he suggested that for the name. Taking a cue from the movie Blazing Saddles I said it was too Jewish. So Dave said Ox, and we laughed, and so it was.

**FOE** What made you start Chumpire, and give us a brief history.

**GREG** Chumpire started September of 1990. After figuring out that I could do something myself. It started out as a 14 page zine, has shrunk to a one page zine. Chumpire means stupid arbitrator or fools domain. It's a mixture of chump and umpire and empire. I'm up to issue #29, I try to put one out every other month. I do record and film reviews, show reviews and griping about my job (Spanish Teacher at Northampton Area High School, where Paul Meatsquat graduated from) and whatever happens to cross my mind.

**FOE** Do the kids know that you are into punk rock.

**GREG** Yeah, they've seen photos. I used Jessica and Tunbul A.C. (**GREG** was in both of those bands) photos in my class, and had the kids describe what they saw, in Spanish. I don't know if any of them go to shows.

**FOE** Did you start the Emporium (250 miles northwest of the Lehigh Valley) scene while you were out there teaching?

**GREG** In Emporium proper, yes. The first punk rock I played was in Spanish class, I played Jessica's "Bad Seed", from Jessica's tape, and the first show was put on by Scott the guitar player/singer of Freak Accident (myself and three high school kids). I taught one of my students to play bass, and she taught others how to play the covers I taught her. The first show had 86 people, and when I went out with Ox and Weston on January 29, 1994, there were 115 people in attendance. So it's growing. They dance nicely to every band that plays and they buy a lot of punk rock, especially the Lehigh Valley stuff.

**FOE** You do the whole DIY thing (**GREG** also set up shows in the Lehigh Valley and does a radio show on WLVR), what is your motivation?

**GREG** Nobody would ever touch anything I do bandwise. Turnbull AC and Ox, don't fit into anyone else's scheme. I found out that doing all the things are easier than I once thought. Now it all boils down to me having money for the projects I want to do. Maybe it's because I wanted to get bands I wanted to see here. Who else would have had Sockeye come and play.

**FOE** Why do you record at Mindy Janes?

**GREG** I haven't had a bad experience yet and it's cheap!

**FOE** Describe the Ox sound and people's reaction to the Ox experience.

**GREG** The Ox sound is built around my cheap guitar setup and my nice bass setup. Tony puts it all together with the beat (he is regarded as the best drummer in the area) and I still believe in songs. So I don't experiment too much, just throw a bunch of chords together for two minutes. After we played Moosic PA, we were told that people either liked us or were confused. My opinion of the band keeps switching between new hardcore or post hardcore, but I don't feel very tough. The old songs were composed by myself, all alone in Emporium, and I was listening to a lot of FOD while shaving up there. And the loneliness was a motivating factor while writing most of the songs. The hardest part about showing the songs to Dug was that the bass didn't follow the guitar, refer to Pepper Spray on the 7" to see what I mean. I scream the lyrics because my singing voice is so bad, and it's just another part of me breaking out, because no one expects to hear this little quiet guy screaming really loud.

**FOE** Do you think punk rock can change anything.

**GREG** Yes. After talking with a girl in study hall, I believe that just actually finding new things to listen to and different ways of thinking will bring about some positive change in people. She was a girl who thought that bands like Tool and Rage Against the Machine were avatars of rage. And that the world was washed up because these bands said so. So she's reading these interviews with these bands in these big magazines and she should really go snooping around in the underground. She thought Caroline was a small label. But, I guess the best example would be having Heather play bass for Freak Accident. Because she was considered weird for her nose ring and hair color, until girls and guys saw her playing raging fast bass, in a sloppy hardcore band and then they respected her. Conditions were right and I got a lot

of zines for her, and she spread the word out to other people. As for myself, I've been saved from a real mediocre life by punk. Because up until 1988, life was pretty much no picnic. But going to shows and reading zines gave me insight on the fact that I could do a lot of stuff without associating with people who made me feel like shit. The people around me prior to punk were concerned with typical social behavior of drinking and fucking (this was college) and I wasn't too much of a good candidate for either. I still drank and just basically took an I don't care attitude about socialization. And now, I try and be as harmless as possible, by letting people know anything I do is trying to help them. In school I tell kids that I'm here to help them, and I'm not against them. So punk rock has even influenced me as far as the way I teach. If anything I'm pushier and more open in teaching and punk rock. Punk rock has given me confidence in my abilities. My old high school teacher's have told me that I'm not the same person that graduated. "You've changed!" And I wasn't even half of what I am today when they last saw me.

**FOE** Have you taken on any of punk rock's social and moral values?

**GREG** I don't eat a lot of meat, TV is no longer a part of my life, I don't like to see any one thing interfering with one's life, whether it's religion or school, but people also have to work at just getting through life with quiet revolt instead of setting off smoke bombs in the study halls of life. I guess I like peace more than fighting. The punk rock morals, there are so many factions,

that I just mix and match, I'm 90% vegetarian, 90% straight edge, 99% celibate, and 100% caffeine abused and part of a sexual minority.

**FOE** Celibate by choice or not.

**GREG** I'm sure if I wanted sex every night of the week I could but I don't think it would be fun. Cuz I like to care about the person I have sex with.

**FOE** What's the Greg Knowles diet?

**GREG** Chocolate, coffee, and my daily dose of grits.

**FOE** What does the future hold for Ox?

**GREG** We want to tour the South for a week on \$30 guarantees. A new 7" in May, and August might be the end of the band, if I get a job somewhere else (the teaching job is a long term substitution job) which really makes me sad, cuz it's been fun so far. We'll also be on two comp 7"s, one on Chicken Farm records, the other is coming out of York PA. I can't wait to play more small towns in PA! I'd like to thank Dug and Tony for rounding out the Ox sound cuz they do things with their instruments that I couldn't dream of. (Sorry they couldn't be hear for this interview).  
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