

FOE Who's involved with Rave Records? Is it a full time job?
Todd Longer than full time unfortunately. I work from about 12 til 10 everyday during the week. If something is going down I do stuff on the weekend too. We're at the point now where it's 2 people running an entire label, myself and Rich, which includes doing the booking, sales, promotion, etc... It's too much work for 2 people. We're not earning any money to really hire people, although we've just hired someone to do promotion. Reg who's about to become the music director at WKDU in Philadelphia, will be doing about 20 hours of promotion work a week. He goes to Drexell Univ., which has a co-op program. So in March, he's going to do his co-op with us. We've thought about hiring a sales person, but up til now I haven't found anyone in the Philadelphia area who is responsible, competent, and knowledgeable enough to do such a job... We've started our own distribution service for small unknown labels. If you want I can go through all the processes of what we do.

FOE Sure go ahead.

Todd We basically sign bands to the label. All our releases that are full length come out in all 3 formats; cass, cd, lp. Why we're able to do that is because we have a partner now in Europe, Semaphore. They do Rave Europe. They are producing all of our releases on cd and vinyl. I am manufacturing all our releases on vinyl and cass. I give them cassettes on terms, and they give me cds on terms. I also give them singles on terms cuz they don't really manufacture singles in Europe. But the single is kinda coming back anyway. So I trade them singles and cassettes for cds. And we kinda trade off on each others invoices, so neither of us has to generate the cash flow to pay each other. That's the most difficult thing, generating the cash flow. Cuz you can't get paid from your distributors. The guy who put out the Kiss covers comp. on C/Z records, sold 10-15 thousand copies of that record. People owe him 20-30 thousand dollars. He's got to badger the distributors to pay him. That's the whole reason for our distribution thing. We do everything COD. So we get dollars coming in. However, that leaves us to then pay the other small labels, and them having to badger us to get paid. We've picked up a lot of labels like Merge, Leopard Gecko, Donut Crew, all of these sorta obscure labels that put out mostly collector singles and lps. There's not really anyone else except for maybe Subpop who carries all of that stuff. Cuz most of those labels don't trust bigger distributors. They know they won't get paid on time. Most of them have been pretty good about giving it to us on terms. So far we've been fine at being able to pay them. We're trying to expand our mail order too. The only thing you have to worry about there is if the check bounces. There are a few distributors out there that will rip you off and never pay. They basically call small labels, get as much on a first order as they possibly can, like 100 pieces of every item in your catalog, to keep and sell from their catalog. The whole problem in the industry is it shits on the little guy. That's why I think Twin/Tone, Subpop have become like little majors. They've created this exclusive deal with like one distributor. That way at least they can get paid.

FOE So I take it the way the label is run has changed quite a bit since you first started...

Todd Well, the label was started by Dave the Rave. Who used to be a promoter here in Philly. He put out that Discpan Hands comp, which was the first release on Rave. He was in the process of putting out the Trained Attack Dogs when he asked me if I was interested in getting involved. I asked Rich who is my partner, who was in a band called Homo Picnic and then shortly thereafter became the More Fiends drummer

if he was interested in getting involved with me and Dave. We soon realized Dave's long term interests were not with the label. So he basically filtered out and we took over. The first thing we did from start to finish was the More Fiends "Yo Asphalt Head", lp. Then Scab Cadillac. Then I got a scholarship to study German literature in Hamburg West Germany. While I was there I realized what a market there was for this sort of music in Europe. So I started hooking up with people and got our stuff imported. Then we got a deal with a label called Anaconda from Hamburg to license our records. One of the guys in Anaconda turned out to be a scammer and we lost a bunch of money. They only did the More Fiends and Reverb Motherfuckers. Then Semaphore offered us the new deal. They were the ones who originally imported our stuff and sold quite a few of our records.

FOE Is that with the Bitzcore stuff?

Todd He's a friend of mine from Hamburg. In Europe there are two major alternative distribution networks, EFA (Germany)/Southern Studios (England), which Bitzcore is involved in. They do Dischord, Touch and Go, import SST, and Glitterhouse which is Subpop. Then there's Semaphore who have offices in Holland, Spain, Germany, and they use Revolver in England. And that's the people we're involved with. So over there you call up one of the distributors for an exclusive deal while here you call up all of the distributors. Over there, when you make a deal, they really push it. I think they take it all a little more seriously. Here you don't trust anyone.

FOE When you were over there, is that when you hooked up with the Alien Boys?

Todd Yeah, they're pals of mine from Hamburg. Hamburg is a city Americans are unaware of. Which is probably good. Its probably the hippest city right now in Europe. Berlin is notorious because of the riots. Amsterdam is notorious cuz of the drugs. But Hamburg, there are so many "freaks" and "weirdos" and alternative people there, that its a major city to play. I saw a lot of American bands in Hamburg that have never come to Philadelphia. And bands like the Wipers, who are relatively unknown here, I mean they have some sort of legendary status, but when they would play Hamburg, they would sell out a 2,000 capacity club. I was just amazed. Victims Family go over there and draw 1,000 people. No Means No draw 1,500-2,000 people. A lot of it has to do with the governmental system. Which is more socialized. There's all these youth centers that support the arts. They get federal funding. So they can pay guarantees based on their budget for the year. Musicians are artists, and artists should be paid just like laborers. There's also a basic respect for a musician. They get you a hotel, dinner, give you what you want to drink, make sure you have breakfast before you leave. Here you get to a club playing this kind of music, its raining out, you knock on the door and they're like, "We're still cleaning, come back in an hour!" They treat you like shit. The general population in America doesn't think artists should be paid, they think they're freaks.

FOE The Alien Boys are coming over here.

Todd Yeah, they've been here once before. They did a three and a half week tour with Starvation Army. This time they'll be doing dates with Starvation Army, Victims Family, maybe some dates with Coffin Break out on the West Coast. They've toured in Europe with Soundgarden and Cosmic Psychos. And believe it or not they're going to do some dates with Hawkwind before they come over.

FOE Are you setting up the Victims Family tour?

Todd Yeah, I am helping them book a tour. They have lived at my house on their US tours, stranded with their cars broken down. Both of their tours went pretty bad. They saw tours I was booking when they were here, for bands who were relatively unknown compared to them and they asked if I would consider booking them. I said fuck yeah! Rich was traveling with them in Europe after the More Fiends finished their second tour. They are going to tour the West Coast as far as Nebraska with NoMeansNo. Then thru the Mid-west to the East Coast by themselves. Then they'll hook up with the Alien Boys and play 4 shows with them. Then they're going to Europe for 3 weeks. They're playing a festival in France where they'll get enough money to pay for their tickets. Then they're gonna come home and tour back across the US.

FOE Back on the More Fiends thing. How'd you hook up with the John Peel Session?

Todd I was pushing the band in Europe and one day out of the blue, John Peel calls up and asked for their record and we sent it to him and he started playing it. People would send us tapes like listen to John Peel ranting about your band. I started trying to book the More Fiends in Europe, so I called up this really big booking agent in England and told him I was trying to book the More Fiends and he's like that was my favorite record of the year, I'll book them. This is a guy who books like Mudhoney, Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr. I was like Fuck! I think he thought the band was a little bit bigger. It turned out the first tour was a loss. But he arranged a Peel Session and I met the people from Southern Studios at the New Music Seminar. So the Peel Session is on one side, & the Southern Studios is on the other.

FOE What has been your best seller so far?

Todd Reverb Motherfuckers has really done well. It's the name. The 2 split singles we did went in a wk. AntiSeen/Rancid Vat, Alice Donut/Da Willys. I think the Coffin Break/Victims Family single will go even faster. Starv. Army has done well. I just signed AntiSeen. I think it's almost impossible, unless you're like the Dead Kennedys to go over like 3,000 units sold. Unless you have an exclusive deal with a distributor who's going to market it and push it. Up til now, no ones really shown that kind of an interest. It would have to be the kind of deal where I would

still have full control. SubPop has one of those with Caroline. They're allowed to do whatever they want. Look at the Dwarves record. A lot of people wouldn't touch that.

FOE Have you run into any problems with your ad "Fuck that Weak Shit"?

Todd The people I thought were going to complain haven't. I had a couple of smaller mags refuse... Rich and I have been involved with bands for a long time now, so we have a lot of contacts. That's how a lot of these split singles with bands who aren't on our label have come about. They're just people we've put up or booked or hung out with.

FOE You don't run into any problems with the labels those bands are on.

Todd No, AT and CZ are totally cool about that. We're gonna do one with Skin Yard/LoveSlug. Skin Yard are on Cruz. The guy who runs CZ is their bass player Daniel. So he said Cruz has no problem. Loveslug is on Glitterhouse, who have this mag called Howl. Its this cool German mag with shock movies and grunge music. They always have a collector's single. They had one with Mudhoney, Laughing Hyenas. I've given them Scab Cadillac and Reverb Motherfuckers tracks. They don't have a problem with me doing Loveslug.

FOE How do you think the new FOD album is going to do?

Todd That one I hope will do well. That's a fucking rocking record. When I got the tape for the new record I was like, you guys know how to sing! I just got the new MRR and the guy called it like his favorite record of the year. FOD and Big Thing are going to tour Europe together in May and June. Germany, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, and the last week hasn't been confirmed yet. It might be Italy or Czechoslovakia/Poland. I'm trying to sign bands who want to tour. You can't sell records if you don't tour. You've got to put in your time and go out on the road, playing shitholes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for 40 people, and if you get \$100 on those first tours on those nites, you're lucky. People cop out on guarantees all the time. People treat you like shit. I mean, if ya go out there and rock out, and really blow away the 30 people in there, they're gonna tell all their friends. And that's important. Starvation Army are touring the South in March, 27 Devils Joking are touring the West Coast in March, Alien Boys are touring the States in April, and FOD/Big Thing are touring. Alien Boys and Starvation Army will be touring Europe in May/June. So its busy.

FOE Is that gig at J.C. Dobbs still going down.

Todd Yep, all 8 bands on the box set will be there. Its not all ages. There really isn't an all ages venue in Philly any more. Every once in awhile we'll help do a thing at the Kill Time, in West Philly. We did Alice Donut and Big Thing. Poison Idea, Hullabaloo, Scab Cadillac, Laughing Hyenas... Theres tons of kids there. If there was an all ages venue, I think it would probably be amazing here...

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