

## **STRYCHNINE and the RAT TRAPS**

are one of the Lehigh Valley's brightest rising stars. They started on March 1st of 1992. The Rat Traps combine Van Halen and Kiss instrumentality with a punk ferociousness. Its rock n roll, but punk as hell! Tight and driving, with all three members of the band sharing vocal duties.

Forrest is the skin and stick specialist, who was also in the terrible straight edge band Step Back (they actually got booted off stage a few times) and Drip (who never got booted off the stage). He's 20 years old and he helps his dad out at the Ice Palace (a skating joint his parents own) and works at Block Buster video on Lehigh street. So stop in for his autograph, he might even give you a drum stick if you're nice. They don't stock porno and only pay minimum wage, so tip him too. He also teaches ice skating.

Dave is the 26 year old bass player who is married with (2) children (he watches television with his hand down his boxers). He works with the mentally retarded at a State run Federally funded school. He's been in a ton of bands: Youthful Aggression, Constraint, Last Cry, Mugface and the popular straight edge band Forthright (who only had one straight member at the time).

Pete Wasko, 21, is a master on guitar and delivers geriatric food to old people whom he gets along with tremendously. He also works at the Shanty where he specializes in dishwashing, which cured his insomnia and pays him \$5.50 an hour. He was in the hardcore band User Friends, who played a school talent show to 1,000 people and the crowd went nuts, screaming and yelling and they won first place. He was also the drummer for Forthright.

**FOE** Who writes the lyrics and what are they about?

**DAVE** Pete and I. The first song I

wrote, "Let it Go" is about having a father who talked down to me all the time, and now I'm telling him that I turned out OK. I heard that all the time when I was 16, how much of a loser I'll be, and now I have my own family and I'm no loser. "Psycho Sissy" is about one of my old friends. Jay, our old singer named the song, I wrote the lyrics. It's about being alone and losing sight of what is important. There's also a new one. Within the first 3 months that I worked at the hospital, one of my co-workers died of aids. The song is about the fact that when the disease started out, I didn't know anyone who had the disease, and how it has now touched my life with friends of mine who have now died from it. There were these statistics around in the mid-80s that by the time you die you will know someone who is HIV positive or has died from aids. Now that it's only five years later, they are saying that you will know someone within the next 5 years. Now it's 1993 and I know two people who died, one who is dying and three who are HIV positive. Not all of them are from work. I still see some of my friends who do some high risk things.

**PETE** "Darkness" is about the LA riots. I was living in Allentown, in a room in a strange house and I just could not believe my eyes that this was going on 3,000 miles away. I was alone and it tormented me. It was frustrating, not about the riots, cuz I can understand the anger, but "Darkness" is about that anger not being focused. The last lines of the song are, "Darkness falls another victim, a mother lost a child, a child lost a father, but none of them were pigs." So it's like, what really was accomplished. It torments my soul. That truck thing was ridiculous. "Nothing Impossible", there's always a story behind every song, and this one is about when I lived out in LA. I went out there thinking I was Joe Cool and had the most

miserable time of my life. I was living with my friend, and his dad was the most angry person on earth. He would yell at me like I was his kid. I was in a complete depression at the time. I had flipped a van on the way out there, didn't get the job I was supposed to get, and I was completely apathetic at the time. So it's basically realizing deep down that I can make it, even with all the circumstances. More specifically, I really just want to play music, even through all these frustrating things going on, and with no support from my parents. I heard about some lady who parachuted from some insane height and her chute didn't open. She fell through trees and landed in mud and survived. I just look at life as you can do anything. The odd things that happen in life. It wouldn't surprise me if some kid jumped off a cliff in Guatemala, flapped his hands and flew. Nothing impossible should be everyone's theme for life. I'm motivated by the problems of life. For example, Social Distortion, they used to be completely wasted all the time, and wrote really awesome stuff. I'd like to tell Mike Ness to start drinking again, and booting drugs. When you put yourself into a problem situation, when you put yourself in a position where you are confused or whatever, that's when you learn more about life, not that anyone should abuse drugs just to learn about life. The more torment you have, the better songs you write, it exercises the demons. It's therapy. My favorite Sabbath song, Ozzy goes "too many people advising me, but they don't know what my eyes see". When I first heard that, I almost cried, cuz it's like this guy is sharing my pain. I like it when lyrics say what they mean. I hate abstract lyrics.

**FOE** What was your favorite gig so far?

**FORREST** We played at Dave's work, a mental retardation home. It

was wild. I wish we would've had a box to record some of the sounds. We couldn't video tape it. It's against the law. Pete was trying to play and they are grabbing him, it was storming and raining outside.

**FOE** How did your gig at the Ice Palace come about?

**FORREST** I knew we'd be able to play here, seeing as we'll play anywhere, especially after doing the hospital thing. We practice here (at the Ice Palace). We thought it'd be neat to give people the opportunity to skate and see/hear us. We gave up a little with the sound quality, but it was fun for everyone. During "Cup of Fury" two little girls were doing their little dances on the ice.

**DAVE** When we were playing "Life Without a Car", some kid went skating by singing the lyrics, which he had to have heard from the "Get The Hell Out" CD. That was a great feeling. It was cool to see some punk rockers out on the ice. It was cool to see Hans fall on his ass.

**PETE** After playing on the ice, and dealing with the echo and everything, playing in a controlled atmosphere is going to be like being a runner and training by running in ski boots and then running a marathon in sneakers.

**FORREST** Pete's got this ski thing, he played a show wearing skis.

**FOE** Who skates?

**FORREST** I jump through flaming hoops.

**DAVE** I skate a little. I went through one of Forrest's clinics.

**FORREST** My parents were in the Ice Follies. Their dream was to open a rink.

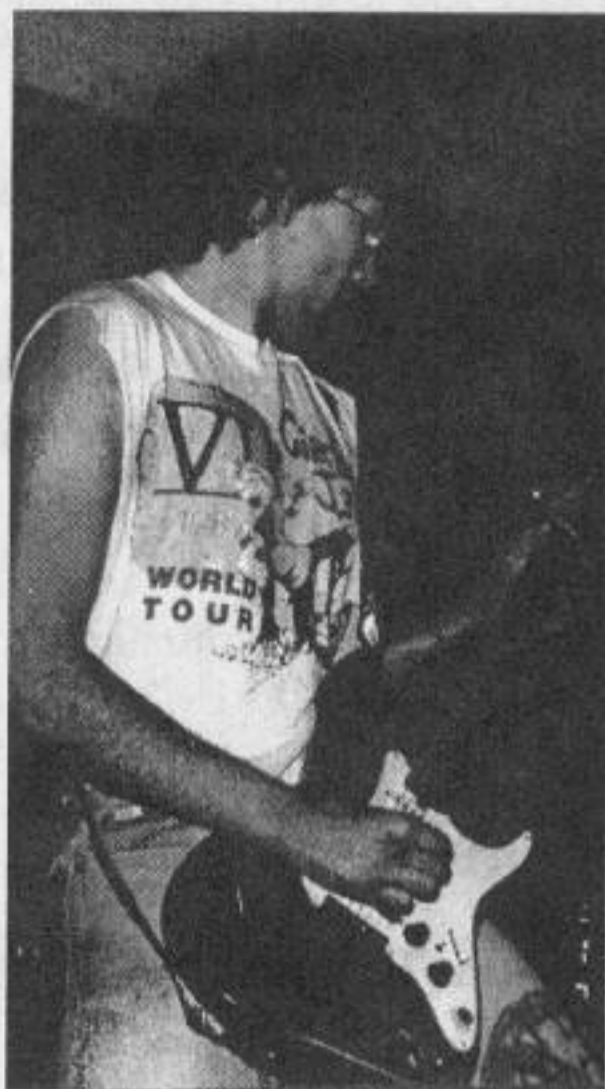
**FOE** Give us the facts, some free advertisement for the rink...

**FORREST** The address is Ice Palace, 623 Hanover Ave. in Allentown. The best public skating times are Fridays 8-10 and Saturdays and Sundays 2-4 and 8-10. It's \$4.50 for admission, \$4 for children 12 and under and a dollar for rentals. There's a snack bar with excellent

## STRYCHNINE AND THE RAT TRAPS



Dave "The Dad" Clewell



PETEY CLEAN

PHOTOS BY JEN WHITMAN

# FORREST

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THE FOE ADDRESS!

hot chocolate and sliders (hot dogs).  
**FOE** Your original singer left the band...

**DAVE** Jay left the band cuz he was going to do a Mr. Yuk reunion thing. And we knew he was going to go back to that, cuz they were all really best friends, hung out, drank together, fought people together. One big happy family. I can't blame him.

**FOE** How does having a family effect being in a band.

**DAVE** It's hard. I just can't walk out of the house three times a week to practice. It's hard, but it's not.

**FOE** How old are your kids.

**DAVE** Four and two. Justin has watched us practice once. My daughter is too young to understand it.

**FOE** You have another song we haven't talked about.

**DAVE** "Helping Hand", with the chorus "Help Me Kill A Nazi".

**FORREST** We played our first show and Jay was still in the band, and there were some nazis in the house. Jay pulled out a hammer and he said come up you fucking nazis, I'll bash your fucking heads in. I just thought someone was going to end up in jail. A lot of artists don't want to get into the problems.

**PETE** When I see the nazis and all the problems they've caused at shows and with everything else, all I feel is rage. When I see old war footage like on the Discovery Channel, it blows my mind. When a nazi skinhead intimidates the crowd, you are not free. We've seen it before at Wally's, when people stuck together, it works. It's in our hands, I despise violence, but I get so angry.

**FOE** What are you doing about recording.

**FORREST** We're going to be putting out a tape with new stuff we just recorded. We also have a demo with Jay, that has great production. We might still put some of that out on a 7".