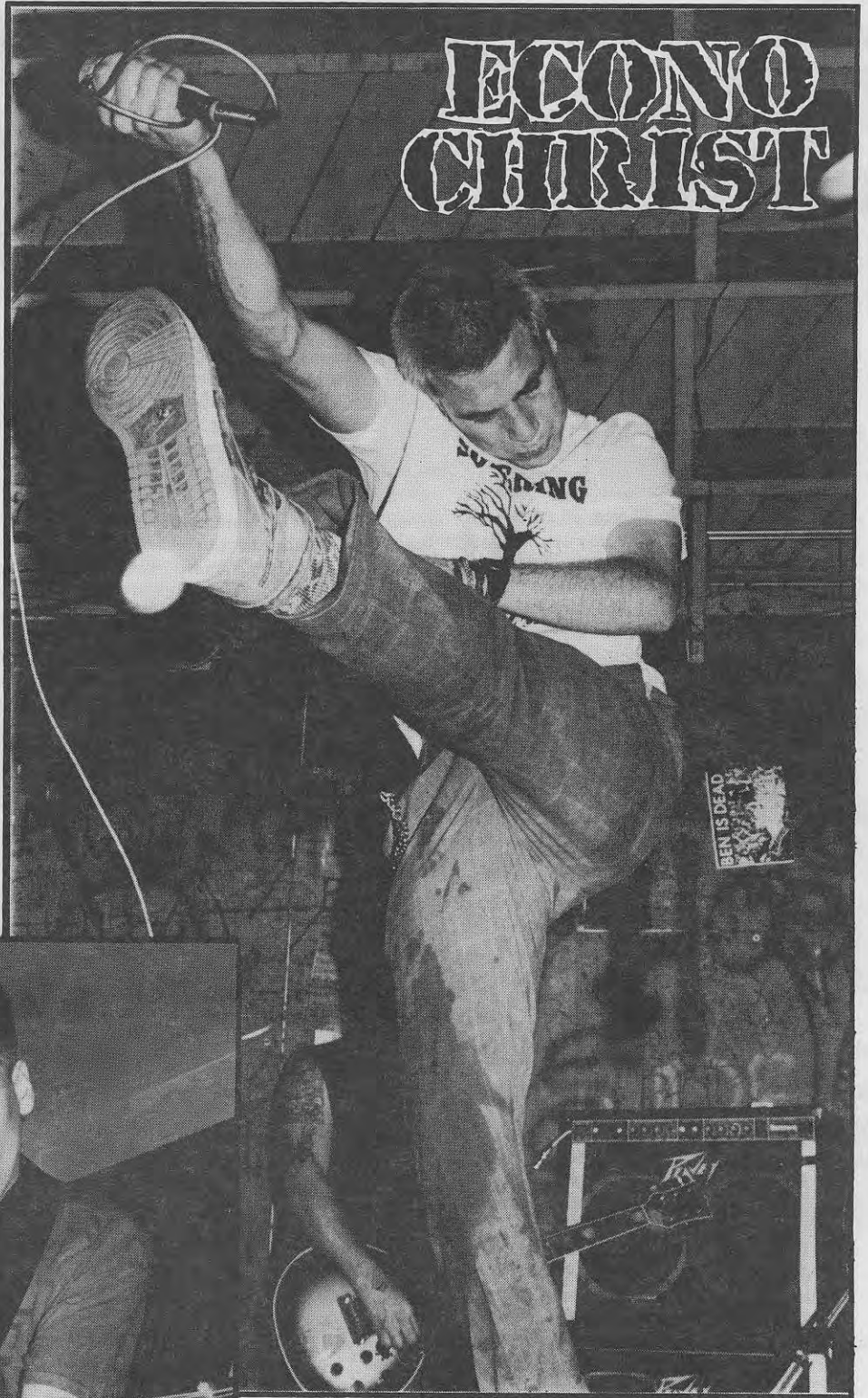


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A TRIP TO THE NATION'S CAPITAL...

HARD.C.O.R.E

...UNDERGROUND STYLE

HARD.CORE

Light the fuse and watch it burn. D.C.'s Swiz sizzle red hot with a highly original approach that explodes with the fury of Jason Farrell's guitar storm, Alex Daniels' pounding beat, Nathan Larson's stone solid bass, and Shawn Brown's sand blasting vocals. The sounds and the words are done with a rage and drive that cannot be ignored, but behind the scenes, the four individuals that define Swiz are still searching for their place in the world. Most everyone is. In the meantime their combination fuels an awe inspiring inferno. Hopefully the dust will never settle. - Kent



KENT: First of all, I heard that the tour hasn't been that great.

SHAWN: No, it hasn't been that great. I think a lot of it is the way it was booked. Poor promotion. It could be lack of interest on some people's parts. What do you think Jason?

JASON: Because we are being booked as a headlining band when we're not a headlining band. The way our promoter, Johnny Stiff, set it up would work for a big band, but we're not a big band. So we're kind of suffering.

KENT: Why don't you think you're a big band?

JASON: The way he booked it would really work for the Cro-Mags...

KENT: Have you been playing clubs that are that big?

JASON: Yeah, we've played clubs that would have those kinds of crowds, and there's no way we can ever draw those crowds. We're not a very big band. The way he sets it up is as if someone said, "I want you to set up the Cro-Mags." He'd be like, "Oh, ok, I'll do it!" But it's like, "I want you to set up Swiz," and he's like, "Whatever." So he sets it up, but he doesn't really do anything about it—like promoting it. So we've pretty much suffered through the whole thing.

SHAWN: Like I was saying, a lot of places we played, when we got there we're like, "Did you advertise for the show?" and they're like, "Oh, well, I sorta advertised for it. You guys wouldn't draw anyway," that kind of thing.

JASON: That's really a quote, too.

KENT: Wow... Have you guys been playing with a lot of overtly straight edge bands like the Gorilla Biscuits?

ALEX: We only played two shows with them.

JASON: And that was a pretty mixed bill.

ALEX: Actually, we toured with Shudder To Think, who are probably the premier straight edge band.

NATHAN: You can hear 'em singing back-ups on that song.

ALEX: Actually, the bill in San Francisco was good, I thought. *Gorilla Biscuits, Swiz, American Standard, Shudder To Think, Inside Out, and Amenity.*

JASON: Yeah, it was nicely mixed.

NATHAN: It was a big show, too...

KENT: It wasn't as big as last time you played with Soul Side. There were a lot more people there and you guys seemed to be a lot more energetic, too.

JASON: I had a better show this time.

NATHAN: Yeah, I thought it was much better.

KENT: Oh really, I felt like you played better last time or you were more into it.

JASON: Well the thing is, last year we could only play six songs. So when you're only playing six songs you don't have to worry about getting tired. We had to play a short set last year because we weren't

really on the bill. I thought the set was a much better set this time.

KENT: Also, what was that first song you opened with? Obviously something about racism. I was going to ask how it feels to be a black man in a predominantly white scene?

SHAWN: You know I really never thought about it until the last couple of years with the whole skinhead thing and racism thing that has popped up. I don't think I really feel different than when I first came into it, but I'm a lot more aware. This isn't the perfect little niche of the world, that I thought it was when I first got into it.

NATHAN: The hardcore scene is subject to just as much shit as the rest of the world is.

KENT: It especially seems weird to me because right now there is all this discussion of racism, but still it is predominantly a white scene.

SHAWN: A lot of people don't know what racism is. Same thing with sexism, a lot of people don't know what it is; "I'm not a sexist and stuff but I'm going to go and do this..." People don't know what it is.

KENT: What's that song about?

SHAWN: Well, pretty much it's about my girlfriend's father. Her parent's are like, "Well, he's a really wonderful person, but..."

KENT: She's white?

SHAWN: Yeah, and, "We guess you like him a lot, but we still don't want you going out with him." I'm supposed to change myself?

KENT: How many new songs do you have?

ALEX: We have about nine or ten.

JASON: We have four that don't have lyrics. We would love to play them, but they're not ready to go.

KENT: Most of your lyrics are really personal, and not exactly great topical things that are easy to understand. One question I have is on "Wash." Do you still feel that bitter toward Dag Nasty?

SHAWN: That's not necessarily about Dag Nasty. I take it like it's just the attitude of the song. Listen to "Exercises," I don't really think that lies are exercises. The way I took the song is, you know, sure I nonchalantly lie to somebody, that's really funny or whatever, but I take it really personal when someone tries to lie to me. You could take it that way, as a swing at Dag Nasty or whatever. I didn't really write it to be like that.

JASON: Maybe a swing at that kind of attitude.

SHAWN: Yeah, if people want to think that then they can go ahead and think that.

KENT: That chorus is just so blatant.

ALEX: Actually, when we put that out there was a lot of discussion about, "Gee, maybe this is going to be a big controversy," or, "People are going to think of us as an anti Dag Nasty band", which would be a really bad thing because out of all the things to sing about that would be like the one millionth part. That's like negligible.

NATHAN: It would be a waste of time.

ALEX: The reason we decided to keep the line in there, and keep the song as it is, is because it is really about so many other things that we decided to go with it.

KENT: Have you been getting any feedback from that song?

SHAWN: Oh, yeah, I mean people ask about it.

JASON: People notice it.

ALEX: Mostly the feedback we get is just non-feedback.

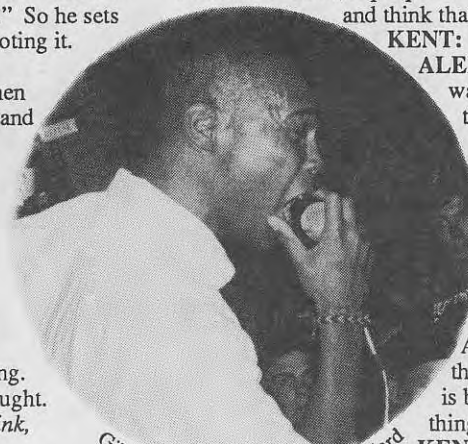
JASON: Yeah, exactly.

ALEX: Like we played in Houston at the Axiom and the guy that set up the show didn't promote it or anything. Three people came.

JASON: It was a huge place, it was so depressing.

SHAWN: He's a mother fucker, man. He was the guy that was like, "You guys wouldn't draw anyway."

KENT: I would of thought your tour would have gone well. Didn't your record sell?



Gilman Street, 7/29/89, photo McClard

JASON: It's a very small label. We sold out the first pressing, but that's only 2,500 records, and 500 of them went to Holland.

ALEX: That's spread out pretty thin all over.

JASON: In the United States there maybe 1,500 people with the 500 still caught up in stores, So if you spread that out fifty states it's really not much of a tour...

KENT: It seems like you would have big shows.

JASON: That's what we thought, too, and that's why we're so disappointed.

ALEX: We haven't played places we already played so far on the

We mostly did the South Texas and stuff. The places we've already played, like and Lawrence, Kansas, we had shows. We might just need to play over and over again.

KENT: A lot of your songs seem to be fairly personal, what is "Taste," for example, about?

JASON: That was written by our first guitarist, I mean, we used to be a five piece. After five shows we asked him to leave. He wrote the lyrics to that and to "Quick," and it's not that... We were going to change them because they really just weren't about anything, but then we thought that they went with the song. It formed with the song, so we just left them.

ALEX: And "fire" and "desire" are rhymes in it so we decided that it's a classic.

KENT: What kind of direction are you trying to go in lyrically?

ALEX: Actually, here I'll tell you, lyrically, we have a demo tape out of four songs, and we really decided that we had better get our ass in gear as far as lyrics are concerned because we really hadn't thought about it a whole lot before. Ramses would come to practice with lyrics, "Ok, great," or Shawn would come to practice with lyrics, "Ok, great."

SHAWN: I like my lyrics.

ALEX: Not that we didn't like them, but we didn't sit around and think about what we're talking about. Still, even as we write new lyrics...

JASON: We're getting desperate.

ALEX: There is a feeling of this kind, "We really don't have a message, we're trying to find out exactly what we're saying," but we won't sell ourselves out to some bogus straight edge movement or something like that. So

we don't have an instant anthem, but legitimate anger feelings, and joys that we pen down

So we're out what and what bullshit, usually is good does is

NATHAN: song that is a that pretty represents a joint lyrics on behalf of not necessarily personal.

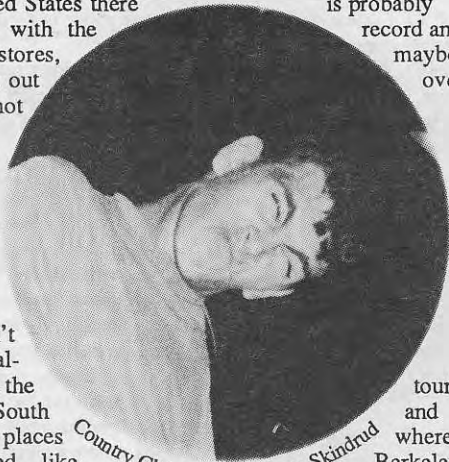
ALEX: Why don't you recite the lyrics.

NATHAN: I don't want to. It's called "God's Speed."

KENT: Did you play that last night?

NATHAN: Yes, it's a completely different approach in terms of lyrics.

is probably record and maybe. over



Country Club, 7/31/89, photo Skindrud and where Berkeley pretty good

KENT: So you do a combined effort on the lyrics?

ALEX: Well, usually one person comes up with the actual song, but we'll just talk about it a whole lot.

JASON: Develop it.

ALEX: "God's Speed" was Nathan's creation. It came from a brain pool.

SHAWN: My lyrics, like the first song we talked about, that's personal stuff. That really bugged the shit out of me. They don't know me. They just assume because I'm black that a relationship couldn't work, or that I'm a bad person. Stuff like that really annoys me.

KENT: That song is personal and yet other people are obviously going to get something out of it immediately, and it had a lot more impact simply by the fact that you are black. Most people that talk about racism don't have to deal with it ever. Like kids wearing these "End Racism" shirts.

SHAWN: Exactly. You don't have to worry about it because you're white, man. You can walk around with that on.

NATHAN: Who's responsible for those anyway? It's a nice thing, but who did them?

KENT: They're Amenity's shirts.

SHAWN: Another thing that's really weird is that if a black guy is walking around with a Malcolm X shirt or a "Racism Sucks" shirt on then it's kind of like he's a militant or something like that, or he doesn't like white people.

JASON: Or that's how he's perceived.

SHAWN: It's just totally not true. That's what I mean by racism. It's a really, really, really sketchy subject. A lot of people don't understand what it is.

NATHAN: As far as the racism thing goes, I mean, we're a bunch of different people from all kinds of different backgrounds, in terms of racial things, and here we are and we're operating together and I don't even fucking notice it. It doesn't make a difference to me. That's a statement in itself.

SHAWN: It doesn't make any difference to me. Even when I was a kid growing up, it wasn't until like high school years that I even really, really thought that there were people like that. I was just like, "Ahh, you know it's a big joke."

ALEX: This tour really nails in kind of, just the places we've been. If you travel across

parts of the country you become more aware of that because of people you run into.

KENT: Has there been a problem with the skinhead population at all?

ALEX: Not really.

JASON: In Florida we had a couple of shows canceled, but I don't know what that was due to.

ALEX: No direct contact, I mean, all the skinheads I've talked to... Well, I haven't really talked to skinheads unless one of them had something to say, but I don't have anything against them.

NATHAN: In terms of people fucking with us because Shawn is black, that's never happened directly. They usually, if they are going to say something then they say it behind our backs, which is maybe worse.

ALEX: But see that's the way racism works. It rarely comes out directly. Usually it's just kind of like, "Pssss..."

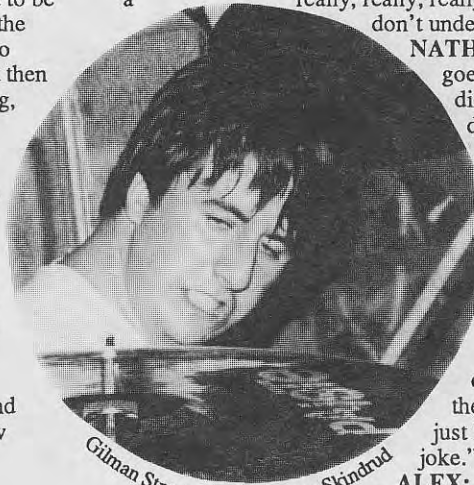
SHAWN: Exactly. Unless there is a group of like thirty dudes who are like, "You mother fucking..."

KENT: What about violence in general?

SHAWN: That's the thing about playing Gilman Street, it was fun and everything, but it kind of bummed me out because there were so many fights. I spent a lot of time fighting when I was a kid. It's dry. It's old. It's really boring.

NATHAN: It's just really boring. It bores me.

SHAWN: It detracts from the energy of the crowd, and it detracts from the energy of the band. I mean if you got a problem with somebody you can just talk it out. There has got to be some way,



Gilman Street, 7/29/89, photo Skindrud



Gilman Street, 8/6/88, photo McClard

we still have a lot of and legitimate legitimate are trying to onto paper. sorting is good is and what I do and what the band bullshit. There is one new song much effort in terms of the band and it's

HARD.CORE



Country Club, 7/31/89 photo Skindrud

KENT: At the Gilman you were down on the floor actually trying to break up the fights, do you do that often?

SHAWN: Most of the time if I see them, yeah I do.

ALEX: Luckily we haven't played too many places where there are fights.

KENT: The Gilman is notorious for that. Rarely have I been there when there wasn't a fight. I really don't understand why.

SHAWN: Even when it was run by Maximum Rock'n'roll?

KENT: Not as much, but it still happened.

unless somebody openly walks up to you and busts you in the face. That's the only way you could really get me to fight now. I'll talk to somebody that wants to fight. If I hear that somebody has a problem with me then I'll talk to them about it. Fighting is just ignorant, you know?

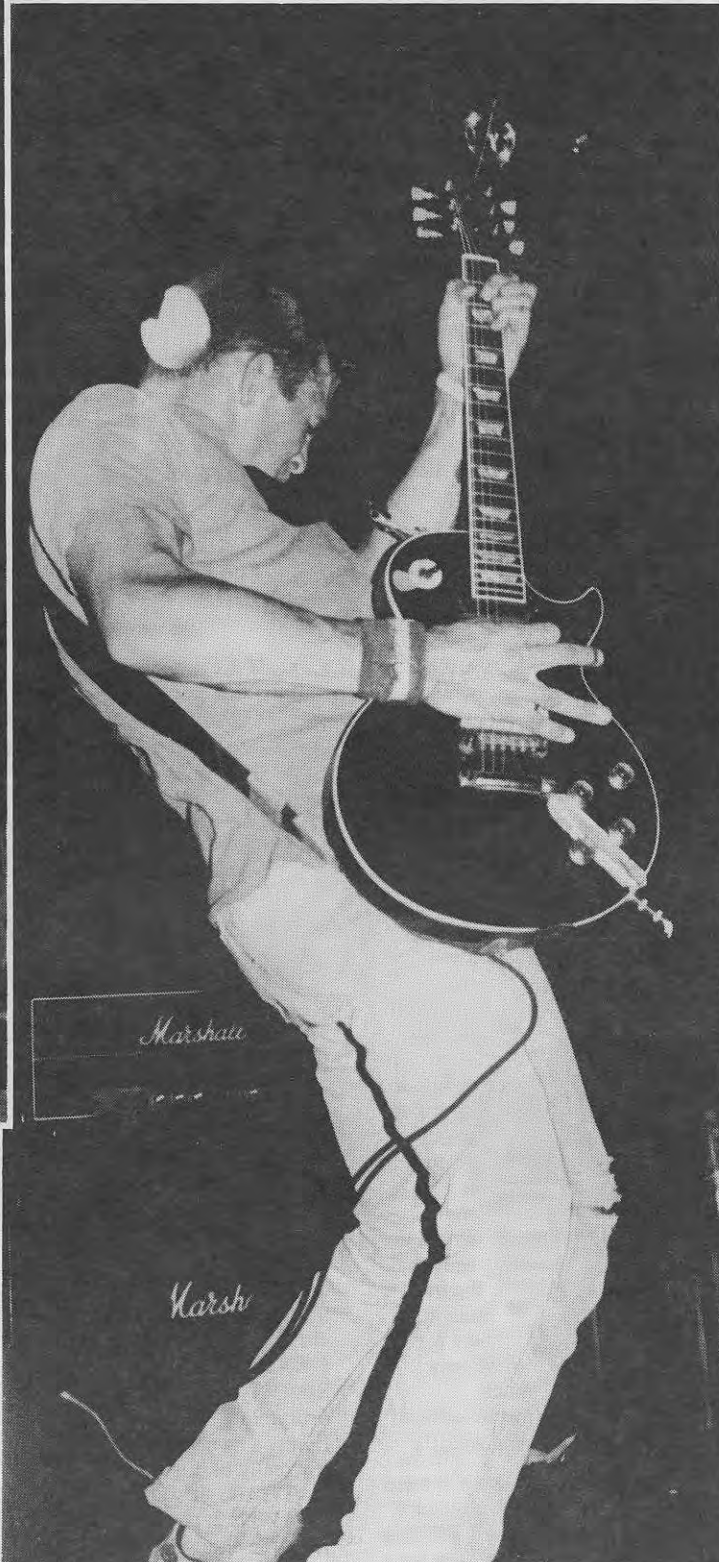
BILL [American Standard]: I went to a boxing match last week and a hardcore show broke out.

KENT: They've always had trouble with skins. What else shall I ask?

ALEX: I guess we've got to become more controversial so there will be more questions.

KENT: The Dag Nasty thing was the obvious question and a few others, but other than that there wasn't that much that I could think of that was that striking. I love the band, but there definitely isn't a direction that you can grasp onto.

ALEX: I think that's pretty good in a way just because a direction



Country Club, 7/31/89, photo McClard

implies some sort of organization and like people getting together for their counterculture or whatever. But as far as the whole punk counterculture, like at shows in D.C., I don't go there and have a really good time. I do looking at bands, but I don't have a good time talking to all my buddies because my buddies aren't at the shows usually. It's usually just a couple of friends of mine. You can't really leash us to a whole movement kind of thing because that's not what we are. We're just kind of four guys trying to put out some music, while getting along with each other. Sometimes we do. You know, there is a lot of clashing between us, but like that comes out in the music.

KENT: So you will have a new album out by January?

SHAWN: I guess around January.

ALEX: We record in late August, but the fact that we don't have lyrics to half of the songs is a major stumbling block.

NATHAN: But I know they're going to be good and that's what keeps me fucking going. Seriously, it's going to be a great record.

ALEX: Yeah, the songs we are going to have for this album are going to be kick ass.

KENT: Are you going to do it on Sammich again?

JASON: Don't know. That's a secret.

KENT: Would you rather go to a bigger label?

NATHAN: Well, there would be advantages.

JASON: Not a bigger label, but like a label that can handle enough orders to make a difference... I don't know. I mean, what's big? The biggest band is Murphy's Law and how big are they compared to any band, like a small band in big business, like rock'n'roll or whatever. They're relatively small.

KENT: But do you have reservations about going onto a big label? Like Murphy's Law's label, obviously all the money that's made on that label goes out of the scene and into just people's hands who want to make money off of it. Do you have any

reservations about that?

NATHAN: What good is the money doing within the scene?

KENT: Well, obviously on Sammich the money is going back to people that are doing things positive and hopefully constructive and trying to keep it away from being a business.

NATHAN: Yeah.

SHAWN: I think you can sign to a major label and make the label work for you. When you sign a contract or something you have to lay down the law: what you're going to do, what you want from them, and what they want from you. If you really think about it, and you come to

advertisement thing.

NATHAN: Unfortunately, it is.

ALEX: You could name a lot of bands that are really not that great that are on big labels that are pretty big. But you can also name hundreds and hundreds of bands, like Trusty for instance, barely anyone's heard of them and they're really good, but they're not on a label. I mean of course, if you are good then you're going to be good, no matter what.

SHAWN: People know what's shit and people know what's good.

JASON: I don't believe that's necessarily true.

SHAWN: I think so, man.

KENT: That's what I think, too. It shouldn't matter what label you're on, at some point it's not going to matter.

SHAWN: Like Midnight Oil, they're a great band.

JASON: Says you. *[laughter]*

SHAWN: I think they're a great band and they have a lot of cool things to say.

JASON: Yeah, but if they didn't have videos and money to pay for videos, then would you have heard of them.

SHAWN: No.

JASON: See.

NATHAN: Unfortunately, it's true that distribution has everything to do with it.

ALEX: Anyway, about record labels, part of me just says, honestly, two years from now I'm going to want to forget everybody in the band and I'm going to want to forget playing the drums,



Country Club, 7/31/89, photos McClard

a working agreement then that can be a good thing, you know?

JASON: Yeah, it can work that way.

KENT: Is it the actual label or the band's quality? Why do you sell more records?

SHAWN: There are plenty of great bands that not many people really know about just because of distribution, just because of how much the label can put out. If you get on a larger label, that means the more music you can put out to more people.

KENT: But is that your quality or the fact that you're on a major label?

NATHAN: Unfortunately, it's the fact that you're on the label.

SHAWN: I think it's both.

NATHAN: Well, to some extent. I mean, there are bands who fucking suck that are on huge labels.

ALEX: Which is a testament to the fact that it is just like a big



HARD.CORE

and it would just be nice to have the record out no matter who puts it out. I know I'm not going to see any money or anything from it, and I'll never see any money from anything from Swiz.

NATHAN: The issue has never been money.

JASON: It's more just distribution. That's the main advantage of having a major label. You get distributed. Our only problem now is that we're not really getting anywhere with the record.

ALEX: Yeah, I know, but a part of me just says so what if it's on a small label, so what as long as the record just comes out. It doesn't really matter as long as I see it on vinyl someday, because I'll just crawl back into my hole and everyone can fuck off.

KENT: If putting out more records doesn't have anything to do with



Gilman Street, 8/6/88, photo McClard
money, then what's the advantage?

NATHAN: More people can hear you. You can have a nice tour, you can go out there and get a lot of people there. There's nothing wrong with that, there's nothing wrong at all.

JASON: The reason you play out is because you want people to hear your music and you want people to like your music. If your music isn't heard by people then you might as well play in the basement.

NATHAN: Yeah, exactly, and if you're satisfied with playing in the basement and your music is a completely utterly personal thing then that's fine for you, but I mean, that's not us, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

KENT: Well, like the club you're going to play at tonight is the kind of club that you have to play at if you're a big band, and I go to Berkeley to see bands because I hate the place. There's no communication between the bands and the audience.

JASON: The Country Club wasn't a tour planned show.

KENT: Right, but my point is that as you get bigger and bigger that's the kind of club you're going to play all the time.

SHAWN: Again, I think it's up to you to establish the communication.

ALEX: Who's to say a big band like Fishbone doesn't communicate with the audience, and they play university auditoriums and things like that. Or the Red Hot Chili Peppers. When they play everyone is going nuts and everything. Or you could be like a big heavy metal act and be like, and this is very true, "Ok let's run through the set," blur, "By." It just depends on what the music means to you. If all it means is getting through your set then you know...

NATHAN: It's not the venues at all. If you can play a big place and fill it, then that's fucking great. What's wrong with that?

ALEX: Because first of all that's really fun and it's why I play, and also it gets you from one place to another place with gas money and money for food. It's unavoidable.

NATHAN: Money is a total reality on tour. You have to have it.

ALEX: I'm 3,000 miles away from home and I want to get from this place to that place just so I can get home.

NATHAN: And if you drive to somewhere in Texas and it costs you \$80 in terms of gas to get there and then you get \$40 at the show... Unfortunately, it's really not worth your time.

ALEX: You want to eat.

JASON: And like you can say not worthwhile. If there was three people there it might have been worthwhile, but there was no one there, and the reason that we got any money at all is because we were like, "Look dude, you fucked us over!"

ALEX: I think from the very beginning the whole thing with Swiz is just that we want to play. I like to play the drums a lot, everyone likes to play their respective instruments a lot, and we just want to play. Right now with the whole punk rock thing, honestly, I couldn't give a damn if I was playing in front of a million people or at a real cool club for like fifty people and everything was being given away to an organization. It just doesn't make a difference. Punk rock is run by a bunch of egotistical incompetence and so is Capital Records. It just doesn't make a difference right now.

NATHAN: At this point there's not much to punk rock.

ALEX: The only thing I could say is I guess we're doing something kind of punk just because we are doing something that is pretty aggressive and pretty raw and not contrived. The whole punk rock set up is not that...

JASON: It's not an alternative anymore. It's really a safe thing.

SHAWN: And it died a long time ago. I think I live an alternative lifestyle, that's why I got into punk rock. I didn't get into punk rock like, "Oh, well, I'm 15 years old and I don't have anything to do. I guess I'll be a wacky punk rocker," or just like, "Those straight edge people dress really cool, I think I'll be like them."

KENT: But didn't punk rock start to die, in my opinion, it starts to die when people decide that they don't care what labels they are on, and they decide that they don't care what clubs they play at, and they don't care about how much they are charging to play for...

JASON: I think it started to die when a lot of people started coming in who didn't have the original attitudes.

KENT: But doesn't that happen by getting larger distribution? Isn't that what happens.

SHAWN: Were the Sex Pistols punk rock?

NATHAN: Not by the time they finished. They were punk rock, but...

SHAWN: What record label were they on? What about the Ramones?

JASON: I think you [Kent] have a point there.

ALEX: I just want to play hard.

JASON: From '84 or '85 until now is when it has been like a mass rush to this underground scene.

KENT: No one has to work for it anymore.

JASON: There's no risk involved anymore.

SHAWN: You used to get killed for wearing a hardcore shirt. That's what was so cool about when we were in the South. There's kids down there and people are like, "Oh man, what a goof, he has a mohawk," but he's walking around in Alabama with a fucking mohawk. There are people down there who are so backwards. You could get killed for some shit like that. That's balls. It's not like living in New York with a crew cut and a big pair of tennis shoes. How scary is that? It's like a totally silly thing.

JASON: But I think you're right, once you start getting a larger crowd you're going to get a lot more people who aren't really sure of what's going on.

ALEX: I think you [Kent] made a good point there, too, and probably

what I'm trying to express is just the frustration of having played seventy shows and not even knowing what the hell we're doing. We have no idea what's going on. I know what I don't want to be, but I still don't know what I want to do. I don't want to be a cheesy band, like five or ten that pop to mind right now that I don't really feel like mentioning, you know?

NATHAN: And why should we even be expected to have this packaged message for everyone. We're just four people playing music.

KENT: I'm not saying you should have a message...

NATHAN: Yeah, I know, but some people are.

KENT: But some of the ethic things are very important. It seems weird, too, because D.C. is notorious for maintaining those ethics. I was surprised that you guys would even play a place like the Country Club, I didn't expect it at all.

JASON: How big is it?

KENT: It's huge. It's not as big as Fenders but it has the big barrier sometimes, and the bouncers will be on stage and you can't even see the bands.

JASON: I didn't know it was such a big place.

NATHAN: I sincerely doubt if the show tonight will be anything like that.

KENT: No, it won't be that bad because there won't be many people. *The audience ended up being mindless and there were a lot of fights and asshole bouncers.*

JASON: That comes with where the promoter choose to put us.

NATHAN: We have nothing to fucking do with it.

JASON: If I knew what the Liberty Lunch was then I wouldn't play there because the place is huge. When we played Fenders we were like, "All right, we'll play Fenders, I guess."

KENT: That show wasn't even advertised.

There were less than twenty people there.

KENT: A band like Ignition just doesn't play L.A. because they couldn't get a show there that fits their requirements.

SHAWN: Exactly. There are a lot of things that I firmly believe in, but Swiz is not the vehicle to do it. We just started out to play music.

JASON: We would have to say we're probably more into it just for the music and the excitement of playing that music then trying to change people's ideas on things.

NATHAN: That's not our responsibility.

JASON: Who's to say we really have that much to say. Just because we're in a band? We're in a band, but what gives us a license to say... I mean, I think we all have certain ideas that could be expressed, but I'm still forming, I don't know exactly what I'm going to do for the rest of my life, so I'm really...

ALEX: If you play a very small controlled show that is going to be cool, then everyone that's going to be there will know exactly what to expect, like, "Oh, this is really cool. It fits the punk rock by-laws and everything." But what if you do play a big place like the Country Club and there is one kid there who would not have access to that, but he does get into it or whatever and he checks it out. That might be worth it. That's what makes playing shows where there are six people worth it. You are probably not going to get much out of it because there are six people and you're feeling kind of dumb maybe, but if one of those people gets into it then it's still fun.

JASON: All the negative stuff we're saying right now is more out of frustration because, maybe some people say it shouldn't be, but it is. It's really kind of embarrassing and depressing to drive all this way to play this huge place only to realize that no one promoted it. It really gets on your nerves, and by the fifth time it happens you're just like, "Fuck it!"

ALEX: Because there are things I could be doing in Washington that would be more fun.

JASON: Yeah, then playing to three people.

KENT: How do you fit in with the whole Washington D.C. scene?

JASON: There are so many different bands. Every band is very different from every other band, and we're probably one of the last ones that sound like we sound, but then again, every other band sounds... I don't know, it's very diverse.

ALEX: Let me say this; I think there might have been some misunderstandings or some distance between us and a lot of other D.C. bands, but I think that has probably grown a little less, especially because we've played a few shows with other local bands. You know, we played two large shows at the 9:30 Club with a major touring act,

Public Enemy, and I think a lot of people who wouldn't have ordinarily checked us out did check us out then, or like people in the D.C. scene that hadn't seen us in awhile came to see us because Public Enemy was playing. I think people have had a chance to see how we've developed and what we're into. I think we're an integral part of the whole D.C. scene, although I'm not friends with everybody in the D.C. scene, but that's just because there is an age difference, and I have friends in other places, I guess.

KENT: How old are you guys?

ALEX: I'm 21, or I'll be 21 in a couple of months, and Shawn is 22, Nathan is 18, and Jason is 19.

KENT: So you're considerably younger than most of the D.C. people.

SHAWN: Yeah.

ALEX: Than the D.C. people, or the bands that people have probably heard of, but there are other bands that are popping up that are younger. Like Edsel and Neverman. The more I travel around the more I realize that it's a pretty neat place to play and have shows.

NATHAN: Not necessarily for us, but they're good.

SHAWN: No, I think in general it's a really neat place because it's so diverse. There is something for everybody, whereas you go to other parts of the country and you only have access to this one thing.

ALEX: It's not like you go to the show on Sunday and that's what everyone is into. There might be a show on Tuesday night at D.C.

Space, Wednesday night at the 9:30 Club, Saturday at the Safari Club...

JASON: And all very different mixes of music at all these.

NATHAN: I'll say this; it was a great place to start going to shows. It was a fucking wonderful place to start getting into music, which doesn't necessarily say anything about the present state, but I think it still is.

KENT: Well, I think that should be about it, unless you have anything to add.

ALEX: You really didn't think we played with energy the other night?

KENT: No, the last couple of songs I thought there was, but I didn't feel like...

NATHAN: Why is that?

KENT: I don't know, the first time I saw you it was just so much more.

JASON: It was also a year ago. That was fifty shows ago, and after fifty shows you get used to just about anything, and unfortunately we have gotten used to playing shows.

ALEX: Well, we just have to get the new songs in.

JASON: Yeah, we've been playing these songs for two years.

KENT: But I will say that the vocals sounded better, your singing style was better. It was cleaner and much more solid than it was the first time, but I didn't feel like it was as energetic as the first time. Plus it was a surprise that you were playing with Soul Side the first time. So it was new and exciting. Are you still playing on Thursday night at the Covered Wagon in San Francisco?

SHAWN: Are we? Is it going to be all ages?

BILL: Yeah, that's what Amanda says.

JASON: It would be in the club's best interest to make it all ages.

SHAWN: They will.

BILL: Toxic Reasons will attract an older audience.

The show ended up being 21 and over.

NATHAN: So you didn't think we had energy?

KENT: I didn't say you didn't have energy, just not as energetic as last time. Don't get all bummed out.

JASON: Did it sound worse?

KENT: No, I think it sounded better, but it wasn't as energetic.

JASON: It's because we were very tired.

NATHAN: It's just a different fucking thing, playing in a punk rock band, then it was. I mean, it's fucking frustrating.

KENT: Why?

ALEX: All the fights, all the people that go to shows.

KENT: Do you think those fights end when you play bigger shows?

ALEX: No, I'm not questioning whether we should play small shows or not, I'm questioning whether I should still be playing drums in the band.

NATHAN: You can have integrity and still be playing big shows.

There are any number of bands who, there are a lot of bands who haven't maintained that, but there are any number of bands who have gotten big and maintained their integrity. That's not the issue. It's just nice to have a lot of people hear your music. It's just nice to play

HARD.CORE

bigger shows. It just simply is.

JASON: For the band itself, it really gets tiring. For the whole tour we have just been thinking, "We are going to get back and then fuck this." It is just that driving around and playing shows where you think you are seriously wasting your time... I mean, you're thinking, "Why am I doing this? There is absolutely no reason why I should be here." We're getting to the point where it's really not any fun anymore, and that's where you have to stop. All we're doing is looking for alternatives to keep it fun, and we're thinking maybe a bigger show might be more fun. We haven't really played that many big shows. Right now we're just in this desperate quest to find something to make it a little better because it's getting to the point where it's not going to be worth it. The one thing that I've always looked forward to is recording, so I'm glad we're recording, but playing live shows, it's depressing. Does that sound...

KENT: I can't necessarily relate, but I can understand it.

NATHAN: Well, you could relate if you had been touring.

JASON: If you had been doing it for two and a half years. You can ask any band, if you hang around that long. We were psyched to play any show for the first year and then after awhile you just start to realize that it is just... You start to lose the excitement of it because it obviously isn't an underground scene anymore. Now when we play I don't really feel like we're a part of anything special. I don't think with hardcore you could bring it back to underground anymore because it's too big. What I would like to do is totally start something brand new.

SHAWN: Exactly.

NATHAN: Hardcore is not subversive anymore.

JASON: To start from the beginning is the only way to make an underground scene. This one is not underground anymore.

ALEX: But you know I think our music is something a little different than hardcore.

JASON: But I mean as long as we stay in the hardcore scene with our slightly different music it's still just going to be in the hardcore scene.

ALEX: I just think a lot of hardcore bands are boring.

SHAWN: The whole thing about energy and playing on stage, I mean, what is energy? Is it when you play the first chord and you're like, "We're going to rock everybody," and you're going to rock so hard that you're really uncomfortable. Right now I've reached a plateau where I feel really comfortable whatever I do on stage because I'm not necessarily playing to make the crowd go crazy or whatever. I want to enjoy myself, too. A lot of people forget that they can enjoy themselves. That's part of what being in a band is about, having fun, enjoying yourself, instead of coming on stage and being like, "AAHHH!!!"

ALEX: It's like Naked Raygun. I've never seen them, but I hear they don't go crazy on stage. But the sound they put out is really balls to the wall.

SHAWN: I don't think they're boring, either. I just think they're really comfortable with what they're doing. There's no bullshit.

NATHAN: If you equate energy with flopping all over the stage...

JASON: Like Ignition, on their earliest shows you didn't know what to expect. It was really exciting to go see them because it was really scary. You didn't know if you were going to get a guitar in the face or something. That was one of the things I said about Ignition when they came back from tour; it was obvious that they were a little more used to being on

stage. You can't say if that is good or bad, or that a band has done something wrong by doing that. Just from exposure you're going to get used to something. That's not to say that their show got worse, it just got different.

ALEX: Also, as a drummer I'm trying to concentrate on getting the best sound possible, and there is a way to hit the drum. If you get a rim shot on the snare drum every time then you'll get a really loud sound on the drum. So sometimes this means settling down and calming yourself and hitting the drums really hard but with your wrists to get a certain angle. Trying to get the best sound possible.

NATHAN: Wait a minute, I want to talk to this guy. You're saying that it is important to maintain integrity, and that it is important to keep things in the scene, but at this point there isn't much room for integrity... I don't know. I want to know what you think.

KENT: I really think there is integrity to be had still, look at Fugazi or Ignition. They define it.

JASON: Yeah, ok, but Fugazi are playing huge shows and their record sales are phenomenal.

KENT: On their terms. They played L.A. and the only place they could play was this tiny little club, and they could have easily sold out a place with 1,500 people.

NATHAN & JASON: But that's Ian.

BILL: Swiz and American Standard can't do that.

KENT: But Ignition was satisfied to say, "Well, we just won't play L.A. if we can't do it on our terms. Fine, that's ok with us."

SHAWN: Exactly. I'm not saying everybody can be like that, but it's part of keeping your personal integrity, what you want to do with your band. I think that's really great. I mean Ian MacKaye and his music. That's his music. That's his thing. So I think it is great that he wants to keep his integrity and do whatever he wants to do with his music, but the thing is that you can't set a standard for other bands by that. To me Swiz is a band that plays music. You know, I have personal beliefs, but the thing is right now this is not the proper vehicle to do it. Maybe if I started another band, or maybe if I was to go and do something else like writing or something like that...

NATHAN: That's true for all of us.

JASON: Also, they're a lot older and they obviously have more established views on what they are doing. I don't think we're as mature as a band as Fugazi is just from all the stuff they've done.

SHAWN: Or as people, man.

JASON: Even as people, and they obviously have some definite views

BBQ Iguana, 10/21/89, photo McClard



on what they are doing.

SHAWN: The thing is, I've talked to Ian before and he doesn't even know why people talk about his band at all because it obviously doesn't fit this kind of structure, or the frame of what hardcore is today. He is trying to do something totally different.

KENT: I feel Fugazi is a total hardcore band. To me they are a hardcore band because it has more to do with values and the message and the emotions they are trying to create on stage then it does with musical style.

JASON: Through the original concept of it.

KENT: But the only reason it's not that way is because people have decided that it's not that way. I don't think it had to change. I think it happened because people let it change. It's just going back to the whole label and venue thing. I mean I don't even want to go and see the show tonight because I'm not nearly going to enjoy the shows as much as the one at the Gilman.

JASON: Well, yeah, we have been looking forward to the Gilman show on this whole tour. I don't like playing huge shows for the same reasons that I don't like playing tiny, tiny, tiny shows. Like in Mississippi, it shouldn't be bad, but if it is a living room and people are like, "Wow, do you guys do Anthrax covers?" That's a serious quote. "No, we don't do Anthrax covers, and, yes, I want to go home." If you are playing a big studio full of those dudes, or a small studio full of those dudes, it is still a waste of time. I just like to play a place where there are a lot of people who enjoy it. If it is a small place where everyone likes it, then great. If it's a big place where everyone likes it, then great. I'm not really concerned about how big the place is.

ALEX: Also, if you talk about maintaining integrity in something then don't you suppose that the people that are watching you have a certain I.Q., or something like, "It's at place 'x,' people here must be really stupid," or, "Fuck, I don't want to play here because people are just going to be like this." I mean you can't make those assumptions.

KENT: But I think there is some truth to that. I mean a place like the Country Club attracts a lot of people who come just so they can slam and so they can fight. They don't give a fuck who's playing. They just want to get the body contact, and I think that's the price.

JASON: I can tell you I was happy that we got a show at the Country Club because it meant a show where there would be people there. I didn't know anything about the reputation of the Country Club, all I knew is that we might play a show where, unlike Fenders there would be more than twelve people there.

SHAWN: What that boils down to is not knowing where to play, not knowing who to work with.

KENT: I'm not trying to blame you guys for playing the Country Club, I mean don't get that wrong.

SHAWN: That all just boils down to the lines of communication between people from city to city to city, which is really fucked up. I mean if you don't know how to book a tour, god knows where you're going to end up.

KENT: The way a lot of bands, say Verbal Assault, Fugazi, Ignition, get around it is they set a door price. Then they just naturally can't play those places. I mean Verbal Assault is going to play the Anti-Club which is this tiny club, but they could play to a 1000 people. They're not going to because apparently they don't want to play for that kind of a door price, and that just cuts out all of those types of clubs. I have a lot of respect for that. To me the music is a sacred thing, and they are saying we're not going to compromise it in any way. That's what it is all about to me.

SHAWN: Well, that's cool. With Swiz we are four different people.

ALEX: We don't even know where to go to dinner. Seriously.

JASON: Sometimes we can't even afford to because we don't make any money.

ALEX: We've gotten into five or six fights on this tour about where to eat dinner. We get into fights about who gets the front seat.

SHAWN: It's like... I'm not even going to say it.

NATHAN: Go ahead, we'll get it on tape.

SHAWN: No, I'm not even going to say anything.

JASON: Well, if anyone has questions about our honesty, well we're questioning it, too, and that's why, can I announce something?

SHAWN: Go ahead, do whatever you want.

JASON: Come September it will most likely be our last show. Before the tour we were still holding onto this, "No, it's going to be good and we're being as honest as we can, and it's going to be a good tour and

it's worth while," but now that we are here. After going through the South, it's not worth it.

SHAWN: Just going through the South, playing here, playing there. There are a lot of conditions that we play under that I just don't like.

JASON: We're starting to realize that we don't have the stamina as a band to face these problems and still be able to bounce back as the same band.

SHAWN: Not all of us are interested in chasing around.

NATHAN: Exactly, you're talking about Fugazi and Ignition. They have bounced back several times. This is their umpteenth time at it and finally they're getting to a point where they can do it. It's not going to work in this band. That's what it looks like. We are four different



Gilman Street, 7/29/89, photo McClard

people and we might go on to do other things.

JASON: All the more wiser from this experience.

NATHAN: I'm glad we can come to terms with that.

SHAWN: We could, man, I'm sure if we still wanted to, I'm sure we could be a huge band.

KENT: I think so. I think you're a great band.

SHAWN: We could be a huge band, but how good am I going to feel when I wake up in Cincinnati going, "God, I really don't want to be doing this. I'd rather be doing something else."

NATHAN: We have pretty much stayed with our original idea. Our music isn't that much different. We're not playing reggae.


JASON: We've gotten better. We got used to each other's styles.

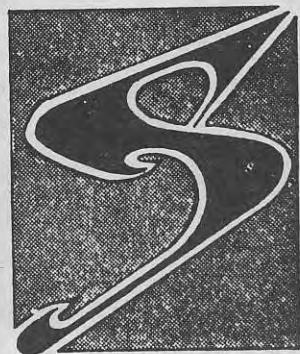
ALEX: If this record ever comes out and if it has good production, then I think it will be really good.

Swiz is still together. They have a new bass player, Dave, and they are looking to release their new twelve song LP. I saw them play in D.C. and they were better than ever. Their new material is amazing, and their spirits seem higher. - Kent



Country Club, 7/31/89, photo McClard

I'm 
seeing
ghosts




wiz

I will let you down.
If you believe in me,
if you follow me,
then you will be let
down. I am just
another person. You
are just another
person. If I follow
you then I will be let
down. People are
just people. To stake
your faith in another
is to feel the pains of
betrayal. Listen to
the words of others
and examine the mo-
tives of your actions,
but follow yourself.
Otherwise you will
be let down.

- Kent, No Answers



HAYWIRE

Country Club, 3/4/89, photo McClard