

keeping his drumming skills in shape with Golden Smog, a pick-up Minneapolis cover band featuring Pimer, Murphy, and members of the Jayhawks and Run Westy Run. As Mars describes it, "We get together and do really bad '70s covers. Some of it's obscure, but most of it's real hokey stuff like Three Dog Night, Aerosmith and Ringo Starr. There was a big buzz for our first gig and we packed the place, but we do the songs really straightforwardly, like we're not trying to parody them. People don't know what to think."

As far as the Replacements go, Mars doesn't have hard feelings. "It was one of those things where I probably would have ended up leaving anyway, because the band was really deteriorating. I was ready to go on another tour, but the Replacements were always the kind of band where you never knew what was going to happen next. It was one of those month-by-month or even week-by-week things. I just did what I did and I was ready to keep doing it, but now I'm glad I didn't go on that final tour--it's possible I wouldn't have had this chance. It's ironic because the Replacements did their last show in Chicago and just a week before that I got signed."

The real irony is that Horseshoes sounds more like a Replacements record than their swansong *All Shook Down*. ♦

Jazz Butcher

by Dev Sherlock

LIFE GETS HARDER: "I've got a nasty sense of humor," confesses the Jazz Butcher (aka Patrick Fish). "And there's only so many *really stupid* questions that people can ask me before I give in to it."

Virtually every word is spoken with a hint of sarcasm, yet the Jazz Butcher comes off as one of the most down-to-earth and friendly people in this big, ugly music business. The last time I saw him, he was spewing endless falsehoods to a small group of overattentive college-radio fans from Rhode Island. "They probably had as good a time as if I had told them the truth," he laughs in retrospect.

This past year, however, has not been quite so much fun for the Butcher, whose latest release, *Condition Blue*, is very much the result of months spent recovering from the trauma of a broken marriage. It sounds pretty heavy for the happy-go-lucky romantic Butcher of albums past, but rest assured. With breathy panting in the backing vocals and lines like, "You have to watch for the exit wounds/ When girls say yes" (from "Girls Say Yes"), it's clear that he's not gone the Bruce Springsteen/ Don Henley route.

Reveals Butcher of the incident: "I've never really received such a kicking over before. It's a bit like, everything you thought was solid under your feet turned out not to be."

It seems the album was a bit of a catharsis. Says Butcher: "Basically, the album was made to say 'come home, come back,' right? And having presented it to the object of affection, I thought, 'Christ, it's gonna work!' But it didn't. So in one very concrete way, it's a failure—but it helps."

"You know," he laughs, "I don't want every girl on the planet to think all she has to

And where humor and romance once faced off to tell tales of love, travel and drinking, they are now applied to songs of melancholia, acute social observations, and, well, drinking.

"Ooh, I think the whole drinking thing has been blown out of proportion," sighs the Butcher, unconvincingly. "Well, sir, I do love to drink beer, and one of the great things about beer is that God made it cheap. And of course, if you're in a band, then for some 20 weeks out of the year, God makes it *free!*" he laughs.

The Jazz Butcher Conspiracy have always enjoyed a greater following throughout North America and certain pockets of Europe than in their native England. The Butcher jokes about his current record label, the highly trendy and prominent Creation records, where he is overshadowed by the successes of labelmates like Ride, Primal Scream, Slowdive, and (until recently) My Bloody Valentine: "We all have to do 16 valium a week, and if anybody produces a record for less than 25,000 pounds, it's not released."

"I'm a closet shoe-gazer," he says later, laughing about musical trends in the UK. "You know, the last time we had introspective, long-haired, pale white public school boys from the counties become popular, they were in bands like Camel and Blue Suede and had two organists that couldn't play. It's only prog-rock, and it's only public school prog-rock with nice equipment. I mean, some of it's great—I like the sound of Lush. But I think most of these groups aren't really writing songs, they're just playing with their reverb units—and quite rightly so, that's why God gave us reverb units."

The Butcher will be showing off his own reverb unit when he tours the States this spring behind the new album. "The sound is, I think, perhaps, going to surprise a lot of people, even the songs from *Condition Blue*, says the Butcher. "It's lush—not like Lush, the band, but like lush, the adjective. There's a lot of big floating ballads that go nowhere at about one mile an hour."

Later this year, there are plans for Fire records to reissue the Jazz Butcher's early Glass records releases on CD. These classic recordings are vital pieces in the puzzling and impressively strong 10-year career of the 34-year-old Jazz Butcher.

"I know musicians in their 30s who say they are 31 when asked about their age," he observes. "The thing is, they're 35 and they're saying they're 31—I mean big fucking deal! Why bother? Even when I was a teenager, I didn't care about my favorite pop star's age—it didn't bother me."

"But then, I'm a funny geezer," concludes the Jazz Butcher. "I mean, I guess I always expected pop stars to be kinda like, a bit older and more distant, and taking better drugs than me, and that sort of thing, anyway." ♦

Swerve driver

by Rosie McCobb

When you first hear Swervedriver's debut LP, *Raise*, it's quite difficult not to start acting like a music critic. "The singer sounds like he wants to be Bill Janovitz of Buffalo Tom" and "nice Dinosaur Jr. riffs." Then one begins to realize that vocalist/ guitarist Adam Franklin really doesn't sound like Mr. Janovitz, and that, besides the song "Pile Up," this band really isn't straying into J Mascis' territory. Now it's necessary to find words to describe this band. Just what it is about them that elevates them from being tossed aside as a soundalike distortion outfit in to something that becomes a part of your wandering mind—a soundtrack for a mental vision.

Anyone who's read Swervedriver's the bits of press here and there will know by now that the four men originally hailing from Oxford, England have been touted as everything from "the ultimate road band" (countless references to cars and driving along an open desert highway) to "chaotic perfection." While one can't help but slip into that mindset when listening to rambling tunes like "Sandblasted" and "Lead Me Where You Dare," the band themselves, by now, have become exhausted by the road imagery.

"It wasn't like that at the start," says bassist Adi Vynes on the phone from the band's hotel room in New York. "When we recorded 'Son of Mustang Ford,' everybody sort of jumped on the imagery as a way to describe the band, which is fair enough, but it's just been going on and on for about two years. I mean, we do have quite a few songs about driving, but cars only make guest appearances in all the other songs."

Of course, as a listener, one cannot help but feel an underlying, recurrent theme in the lyrics and music. When asked if he thought that Swervedriver are American culture aficionados, Adi replies, "Uh, not really, actually. People say that we do have a sort of American image, but I think anybody on the whole of the planet has got access to American culture, through the mediums of television and film, and if you take a look at most of the songs, [they could] be anywhere really." What about the sense of feeling as if the songs were written while reading a Jack Kerouac novel, or that they were meant to be seen as part of a cinematic work?

Adi pauses for a moment, then says, "I could sit here and give you a huge list of artists and films that we like. If you want to relate it lyrically, you're talking to the wrong person."

I don't know what goes through Adam's head, or where he gets half his inspiration from, but parts of it have been stolen from movies and things; JG Ballard's 'Crash' was a book that passed through the hands of the whole band, movies like 'Two Lane Black Top' and 'Easy Rider,' things like that, but that's obvious."

As far as getting involved in filmmaking themselves, Swervedriver has gone in two directions. The actual "filmic process" has been fleshed out in the form of making music videos for the songs "Son of Mustang Ford," "Rave Down" and "Sandblasted." Adi says, "For the first couple, it was more the 'music video' approach. We only had \$700 for 'Son' and about \$1000 for 'Rave Down,' so there's not much you can do with that besides point a camera at the band." By the time they got around to filming for "Sandblasted," "we wanted to do something more visually exciting. We had a couple of more bucks by that time, so we took the filmic approach and shot footage on a deserted beach on the south coast of England, 'cause it's the closest thing to a desert we've got, and sort of frolicked among the dunes for a few hours, edited it, made it look like a road movie. I think that's sort of our greatest achievement, videowise."

Presently, the other direction that the band plans to take is in writing the music for a film in its pre-production stages. "It's something we've always wanted to have a go at. We're probably going to try to do it at some point this summer," Adi explains. "I can't remember the name of the film or anything, I don't know how people go about writing film music, 'cause the only brief we've got has been given to us on a sheet of paper with the summary of the plot on it. How are we supposed to capture the atmosphere of a film from that? I have no idea, but it'll definitely be good to make music that doesn't have to conform to a beginning, middle and end, that just exists as a piece of music, going where it likes without having to come to a logical conclusion."

Creating an atmosphere with music that can gallop along at its own pace with little interference from the outside world seems to be a suitable thing for a band who, I have to admit, suffers in their live presentation. The music itself sounds just as encompassing as it does on record, but as performers, Swervedriver appear as if they'd prefer to be anywhere but on a stage in front of people.

For drummer Graham Bonner, who was so concerned with perfecting the band that he once suggested re-mixing a bass drum part after the album had been completed, the thought of touring was such a downer that he left the band right before the Soundgarden tour began, and has been replaced by Danny Ingram.

Since this interview was conducted prior to that change, we can't be sure what effect the shakeup will have on the band. But according to Adi, no matter what little twists and turns occur in the plot, "We've got a very strong sense of our own identity, and what we want to do, and how to go about doing it. We're definitely not going to let anybody force us to do anything we don't want to do. We're not totally self-righteous, we're not saying that we know everything, but we do know what's right for us, and we do know what's wrong for us." ♦

