MAKE UP

If you don't know (i.e. if you are not already a believer), the Make Up are an incredible band both live and on record. They're from Washington DC and are four people; Steve Gamboa (drums); Michell Mae (electric bass); James Canty (electric guitar, organ, voice); Ian Svenonius (lead vocal). Three of them (Ian, Steve, James) were in the Nation of Ulysees (on Dischord Records) while Michelle was in the Frumpies. They've got two live records (both on Dischord), one studio record (on K records), and around five 7"s (on Black Gemini, Time Bomb, K). Interview by Pat (special thanks to him) with Ian and James. Special thanks to them both also, and Timo for arranging it. P -Pat: I -Ian: J -James.

P: The Nation of Ulysees split in 1993 how soon after and why did you form? I: Well basically you see alot of soul stars in America; for a while they play the game, they might ascend to the top, the upper most positions, stardom. But after tiring of being subject to the whims of the pop market they seek refuge in the church so they can create their own agenda. -We just wanted a retirement.

P:Was it a 100% conscious decision?

I:Oh absolutely

P:Would you regard yourself primarily as a live band?

P: In interviews I've read with say, Fugazithey said that they hope people would regard them as live band more than a record performance band.

I:Oh really? I like their records.

P: I like their records aswell

I:I think its just a different thing, its apples and oranges, you know its the tragic duality but it dosen't have to be tragic. Thats why actually, maybe the live records, not that they could be the live show, but because this idea of sort of saying that everything is important. In the Make Up everything's sorta simplicised less emphasis on the written word, but more on the spoken word. One of the things about Gospelmusic is the servants, basically oration combined in music, you know its a really basic idea communication but dialogue.

P:Do you think the urgency is caught in those records; I remember I got the first live record and I'd only read about you a few weeks before hand, and it was straight out, is that any reason for releasing live records.

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Above; Nation Of Ulysses' Literature



I:Its a media, you know, cos at the time we weren't interested in constructing records. in constructing rock records over a period.

P: 'Cos some bands have spent so long touring and then they spend 2 years making a record and they wouldn't have anything released: unless you caught them live you had nothing by this band to hear them; is that why you did them?

I:Yeah we just wnated to do them more in a jazzier tradition, you know like jazz music its got such an emphasis on; where theres more investment in the moment as opposed to in construction, unless the song itself. Its like Mick Jagger siad its the singer not the song, so thats sort of one of our ideas behind our live records -its the moment and not the particular composition.

P:I've read that you said people talked more about the Nation of Ulysees' literature than the music. Make Up also has similar literature on record sleeves. How seriously do you take that writing?.

I:Oh absolutely serious, I just meant that there shouldn't be such seperation and thats another reason incorporating gospel forms -this oration with music.

3:With Ulysees' everyone sorta put the music in this hardcore ghetto, so like they took the literature seperate which wasn't what we meant.

I: The whole band, as it is now, the whole thing, all the aspects are important P:Are you spiritual people 'cos I've read that you're influenced by an offshoot of a southern Baptist church called the Holiness church. Are you spiritual people, like do vou attend mass.

I: No we don't attend mass, we run our own temple. Spirituality, its just another thing like jazz or art or philosophy, its another thing thats sorta perverted by the people who control it ...spirituality is present in our music.

P:In the 'Ulyseesand Make Up parents are cited as people concerned with censorship of ideas, what do your parents think of that, is that a manifestation of a bad relationship with parents or something?

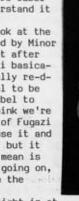
I:No. I just mean the parent culture I don't mean hating parents. Actually I think theres a really grotesque; thats kind of a part of capitalist society -you know, the generation gap: I think thats a very false realtionship. I think age is a very unimportant thing typically, I think its all about power, and the stratifications that are enforced by things like school, and things like the nature of school -when people are put into this kind of tribal segregated mass. Its this idiotic; actually nothing makes me sicker than advertisements that; you know what its like the currnecy of our age to slam on old people. I've always been; we've always been against parent culture and social control and power, but not aganist old people personally. I've alot of repect for old people who make music and who do things. I think its alot harder than for an adolescent to do the same thing.



P:Dischord began with a tradition as a hardcore label, do you think Make Up will help broaden perceptions of this label on a whole?

I:I don't think its been a hardcore label for so long, I know people understand it as such....

J:Its weird though 'cos if you look at the amount of records that were sold by Minor Threat or any of the bands right after Minor Threat, I mean like Fugazi basically outsold all of them and really re-defined Dischord as more a label to be utilized by the band, than a label to really define the band. So I think we're just carrying on more the sort of Fugazi thing where you just like; we use it and they help us with shat we need, but it dosen't define our band. All I mean is that the redefinition has been going on, as far as I can tell ever since the beginning of the 90's .



P:Lke the Fugazi record went straight in at no.18 in England and I've never seen a band of that type do so well commercially -it was a well bought record. I don't think its a hardcore label anymore like I bought 'Smart Went Crazy' record and its really diverse -really really good, but alotof peoples perceptions are Minor Threat.

J:Its perfect for good artists 'cos they have all the tools you need.

P:It sorta documents whats going on in Washington and tht dosen't necessarily mean hardcore now it did then.

J:Yeah well that too.

I: 'Till about 15 years ago. The other hting is that we're just rejecting being defined by a label, you know the way that people sort of soldier to be a labels band -it representing something. Well we represent ourselves and we define ourselves.

P:For any band that plays in Dublin with a distortion pedal -you're a hardcore band, and you might not be a hardcore band at all; and vice versa if you don't play with one. They put these words and you just don't want to be defined, pigeon-holed. Do you agree that hardcore music is a very stagnant form of music today like some bands are playing music that Minor Threat would have played; like 18 year olds fine but 35 year olds on reunion tours

J:Its like a tradition though you can imagine how many bands the Beatles spurned and still spurn to today. So its kinda like in rock'n'roll or rock music or quitar music whatever you want to call it. Its definetely weird the amount of bands that can be spawned from one influencial band and how long people will try and re-interpret that, so I don't think its any different than any other sorta-form of rock music but I mean it is hard to handle.

P:I could think of like 16 bands that I played in or my friends played in that sounded like Minor Threat or Faith beacause we were young and angry, and I think that is justfiled but I think you know; old bands reforming, charging too much, and trying to recapture something, I think is kinda pathetic.

I:Trying to cash in. Thats the problem with alot of these like, especially LA hardcore bands, early 80's; they're just disgusting, I can't even talk about it like Bad Religion, these idiots, the Epitaph shit; I don't even want to go into the repesct of knowing their names.

P:Many articles I've read have said you're being chased by the air men of various major labels. Would you sign or is you independence/autonomy

fundamental to your band?

I:Well we're not chased by major labels, but even if we were, the point is not like major or minor labels, its who we choose to work with on a personal level. Its like who do you trust, are you going to put your trust in something, you know, Sony Corporation,its just dispicable.

P:Last year I went to see Girls Against Boys and I met Scott McCloud, the singer, and I talked to hin for about half an hour, and I just mentioned about the fact that they'd signed to Geffen Records and he made some really justified points why that band should do it, so for me I think its the bands decision, they felt they got autonomy in their contract, I think, they were in a position to ask for; like Sonic Youth asked for a certain type.

I:Well I think, yeah some people can do it. For us its sort of depending on the records we make; we make really random, kind of instant records I just wouldn't want those peoples names on my record anyway, it would be like having Eddie Van Halen play on your record, you know like some Warner Bros mark; they're just like dispicable people, they're like cynical, condescend-

ing shit, shitheads.

3:I just don't trust that whole idea that like everything has been tried .d before and that all these bands that are quote unquote really experimental or whatever have gone with these major labels so therefore the major labels are ready to handle anything thats going to come. Thats just ridiculous; obviously if we propose something to a major label somewhere down the line that wasn't in the contract that we'd never discussed, obviusly it would fall on their side 'cos they've more lawyers. So that idea is just naive. Its just really limited I think.

I:Its just like capitalism -freedom for people and money; that whole thing about the liberation of Eastern Europe its like now all people can buy all the products that they can't afford to buy because they're going to be the workcamp for America. Like 'freedom'; as soon as people say 'freedom' thats

when you should really be wary, like what does that term mean. J:I know capitalism is supposed to represent freedom and how its entering the

world over here, in Europe is just insane.

I:Buy the American model, standard of living is just going to drop, just like in America. America's people always thought/labour inder this conception, that America is really opulant but really its really third world.

P:I was reading a review of that Czechoslovakian movie, 'Kolya', and the director said that when the Communist barriers came down all the movies they got were like 'the Specialist', like this terrible muck, and it said now





their movie has just outgrossed 'Independence Day', in Czechoslavakia, so its the biggest triumph over everything for these people; and I would aggree with that in Europe 'cos I don't think its a good thing 'cos I read that even in Russia, because the police can't do what what they used to do theres like mass murders going on in Siberia and they can't stop them because of so called freedom. Actually going back; I was reading an interview with Ian MacKaye and he said about the fact that alot of so called alternative bands are signing to major labels, this would mean that alot of other bands, younger bands will think 'well I can do it on my own' again. Would you agree with that, that like alot of the so-called Green Days have signed to

labels other bands will just go 'we'll just do it ourselves'.

I:I don't know, the point of the whole thing is that now its considered if you're an underground band, 'underground' dosen't mean the same as it used to, now its a junior rock circuit, and you're just waiting to make it, waiting for your big break or whatever. But thats not the point of it, its the journey not your arrival.

P:Do you feel priveleged that you get to travel as a direct result of your music? Do you enjoy that? I:Oh yeah. But I only go to a place. in touring with this band, I only want to go to places where I think its relevant. The thing about music, music is a very rare

cultural thing, its just not



relevent for everyone. Sometimes I hear about these groups touring in certain places and it makes no sense to me, it seems like real opportunists. I even felt strange about playing in France, because France its not like industrial capitalism in the same way America or England are, so I felt that maybe the issues that we represent, I don't know it its proper to play in places where its not relevant.

P:Are you romantic? As love seems to be a recurring theme to your songs?

I:Sure, sure.

P: Is the music sensual to play?

I:Oh yes, definetely yes.

P:This concert was only £5, which is a really good price. How important are

cheap door prices and all age shows to you?

I:Its really important. I mean, sometimes, we don't have any fixed rule about it because, I think theres kind of a; people have a weird attitude about paying for shows -like can be really resentful about paying high prices, typically they're right but on the other hand people have to take into account of expenses. At least in America if you're playing the underground thing, theres this very reactionary idea about door prices, it dosen't really take into account; like people wouldn't blink an eye if they were buying a sandwich for \$7 but they'd never pay \$7 to go to an underground show.

P:Do you like Al Green? I:Of course, who dosen't.

Contact the Make Up c/o: Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St.NW, Washington DC 20007, USA.