

# HYPE

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# THE monkeywrench

By Adam

**M**ost fun I ever had!" says Arm.

"The whole idea behind The Monkeywrench was to do something new for all of us," explains Tim Kerr, "We didn't want to form a band, we wanted to form a roving gang of toughs."

The individual members of The Monkeywrench have each been committed to their respective bands for a good many years. Kerr himself has been lauded as "an Austin institution," having done time with the Big Boys, Bad Mutha Goose, and Poison 13. Monkeywrench singer Mark Arm is best known for his groundbreaking percussion work with the Thrown Ups. Bassist Steve Turner has recently arrived on the scene as a new member of the Fallouts. Drummer Martin Bland is an Australian refugee formerly of Lubricated Goat. Tom Price not only invented punk rock, but also spans the plank for local heap-toppers Gas Huffer. Kerr continues, "We all really wanted to do something fresh just for fun where it wasn't like 'Ugh, I've been in this band for six years.' I've been playing full time since '78, so it's nice to do something just for the hell of it."

An album by The Monkeywrench slated for February release is titled *Clean as a Broke-Dick Dog*. The record consists mostly of dark, swampy blues numbers delivered with punk rock intensity, although there are some forays into early seventies metal-punk insanity, like "I'm Blown" or the Blue Cheer cover "Out of Focus." "I've always liked that

Stoogy-type stuff," says Kerr, "Consequently I think the album ended up kinda like '60s garage meets Black Flag."

The whole thing began when Mudhoney and Gas Huffer swung through Austin last year and Arm and Price met Kerr through mutual friends. "Tom and Mark had told me that they had been really into Poison 13," says Kerr, "And I had those songs that I had started for Poison 13 but never completed. Some of the songs had no words and others had words written by Mike, the singer for Poison 13, but nobody could understand what the hell they were. So I thought, 'Well, do I just toss these songs out so that nobody will ever hear them? And I realized that I should try to

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resurrect them. I sent tapes back and forth with Mark and we finished the songs."

Sometime in early April of last year, Kerr flew out to Seattle and began a week of rehearsals with the newly formed supergroup. "Martin was perfect for the job. He's got that great swampy swing to his style. I was a little bit concerned about having Steve on bass at first, never having met him, but Mark wanted to have him play. The first night of rehearsals I was scared 'cause Steve's bass playing was a little sketchy, but by the second

night he was fantastic. Goin' 'woo woo' all up and down that bass neck. Me and Tom didn't bother to work our parts out, it was kinda just every man for himself sorta thing. Tom plays most of the clean sounding guitar, and I play the distorted stuff, the slide guitar. That's me on the wah-wah on "Cold, Cold World." I played monica on "Codine," and Mark played the rest of the harp stuff as well as piano and maracas."

"While we were recording" continues Kerr, "We figured hell, if we can get this stuff to sound decent on tape, then maybe we can get away with pulling off a live show." The night after the boys finished recording, they played a gig at the Crocodile Cafe

in lovely downtown Seattle, and stunned the crowd by appearing decked out in matching expensive Italian suits." Kerr says, "I figured if we're going to behave like a gang, then we should dress like one, too." Rumor has it that a deliriously power-hungry Kerr insisted that his fellow musicians wear their suits while cutting tracks in the studio as well.

*Clean* was recorded at Egg Studios over the course of one week with Conrad Uno, assisted by Mark and Tim. "I'm really happy with the recording," says Tim. "Conrad got an amazing sound considering we were in this tiny

little room, playing loud as shit. When it came time to record Blue Cheer's "Out of Focus," we said, 'Okay Conrad, where's your cowbell?' 'cause you've gotta have a cowbell on that song, and he ran upstairs to the kitchen and grabbed a pot off the shelf and said, 'There's yer cowbell.' That's the same sound that's on "I'm Blown," just an ordinary kitchen pot."

After many tearful goodbyes, Kerr returned to Austin, Texas. "Before long, I got a call from Mark telling me that Sub Pop was going to release the album and they needed a name for it. Mark had been reading the Miles Davis autobiography, and Miles would always use the expression 'he was clean as a broke-

was a lot of fun. In fact, I have been talking to Mark about the possibility of doing some shows here in Austin, Dallas, and Houston after the album has been out for awhile."

Sub Pop has already released a seven-inch single by the Monkeywrench featuring "Bottle Up and Go" as the a side and "Out of Focus" and an alternate version of "Cold, Cold World" on the flip on red vinyl and a takeoff on the Impulse label jazz album covers of the '50s." Everybody down here keeps calling me up and asking me for a copy of the single. Sub Pop sent me four and I gave them all away. I didn't even have the good sense to keep one for myself!"

"In the end, I am very pleased with *Clean as a Broke-Dick Dog*. It would be difficult to get away from comparisons to Poison 13, because the songs were written in that same period in that same sort of vein, but I always liked Poison 13, in particular I am fond of that first Poison 13 album, and I think *Clean...* is as good if not better than that." Meantime, Tim Kerr is keeping reasonably busy, "Working on some hip-hop stuff with a friend, writing a lot of stuff, and just generally having a good time not having to go to band practice for the first time in fourteen years."



Photos By Charles Peterson