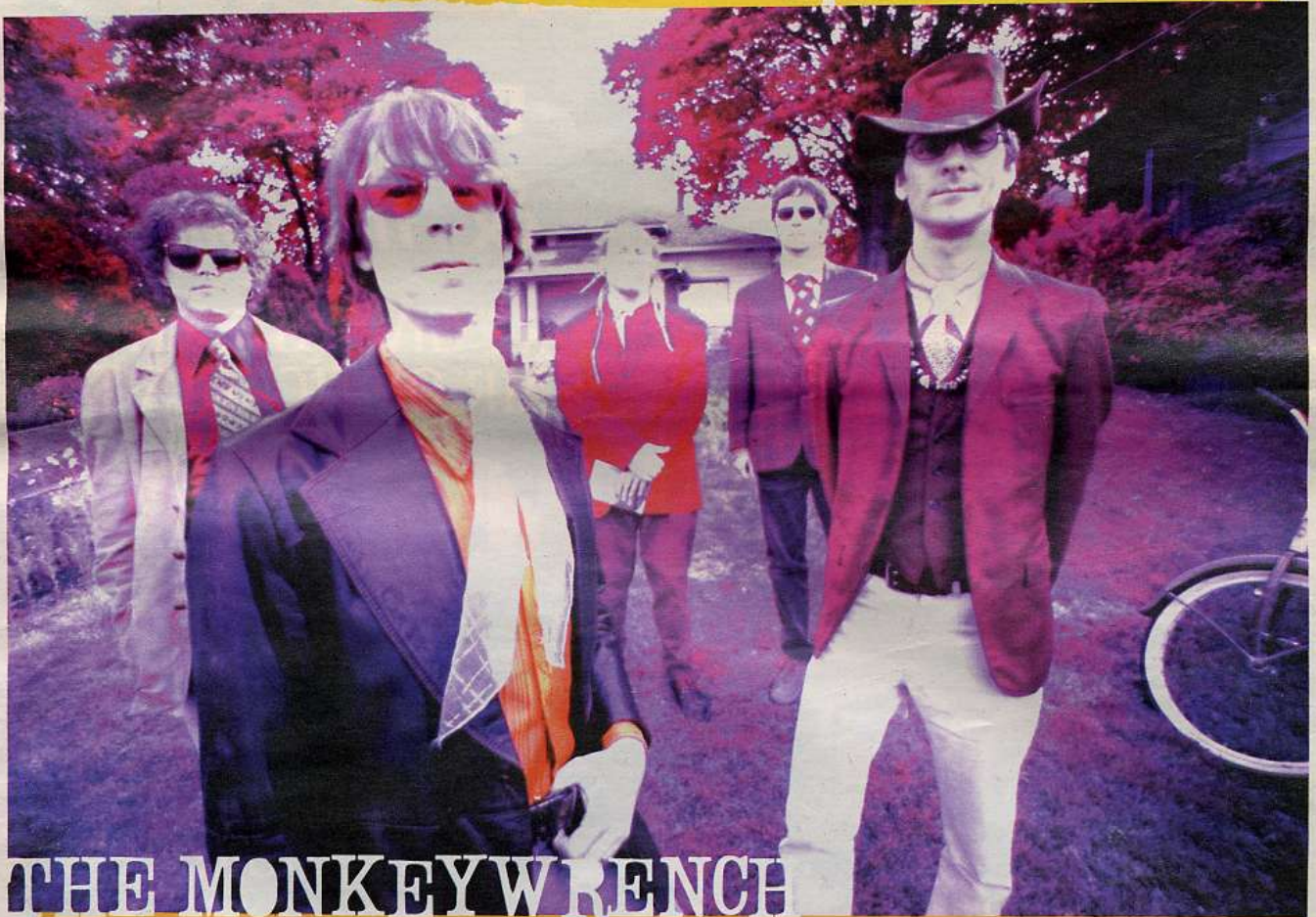


The Rocket

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THE MONKEYWRENCH

GARAGE d'OR

Inside: Patti Smith • Danny Barnes • Beachwood Sparks • Aiko Shimada • Damien Jurado

Steve Turner has never dropped acid. Your pathetic third grade drug trips cannot compare with the visions he receives straight from God. "We are electric children!" He heard a voice, a melody. "And I was like, 'Why did God give me this horrible song?' he recalls. "Why can't you give me a good one just once? I got down on my knees and said, 'Why, God, why? Why am I your vessel?'"

It's a good question, and one that all five members of the Monkeywrench have probably asked themselves at one time or another. Tim Kerr, Mark Arm, Tom Price, Martin Bland and Steve Turner have all influenced '90s rock more than they'd probably want to admit. "I'm really proud of the fact we blasted open the door for Matchbox 20," Arm deadpans.

Mudhoney, Turner's and Arm's other band (now on extended hiatus), haven't gotten much airplay themselves, but they have inspired plenty of imitators, who, in turn, inspired their own imitators, and so on, and so on.... Before Mudhoney, Arm and Turner spearheaded Seattle's riff-rock revolution with the inspirational, though barely listenable Green River. The other Monkeywrench members have enjoyed moderate success in some of the coolest bands of the '80s and '90s: Price with Gas Huffer and the U-Men, Bland with Lubricated Goat and various Australian punk groups.

Austin, Texas native Tim Kerr was a pivotal figure in the early punk/hard-core scene with his bands the Big Boys and Poison 13. Poison 13 split up when Kerr's writing partner, Mike Carroll, abandoned music to pursue a full-time career as a drug addict. Enter the Monkeywrench, which convened eight years ago as a one-shot recording project to rescue some half-written Poison 13 tunes from obscurity. Arm wrote the lyrics (to the songs not already written by Carroll) and sang; Price and Kerr played guitar; Bland came in on the drums; and Turner took up bass for the first time in his life. The result was immortalized on 1992's *Clean as a Broke-Dick Dog* LP on Sub Pop.

When a newly clean and sober Mike Carroll heard this album, he contacted Tim and the two formed the amazing Lord High Fixers—who just played their final show a couple weeks ago.

BUT THIS IS A MONKEYWRENCH STORY...

With their other projects at least temporarily on hold, the five reunited last year to record a new album, *Electric Children* (Estrus). The title track, inspired by Turner's vision, doesn't actually appear on the album because Steve was afraid to write the music for it. If you're curious, the lyrics are printed on the plastic of the CD.

Despite the outward trappings of psychedelia, *Electric Children* is primarily a kick-ass rock album. All five members contribute to the songwriting this time, and it shows: You can hear the swagger of Mudhoney, the punk rock abandon of Gas Huffer. It is blues-influenced in the way all rock 'n' roll used to be before the great 1970s whitewash. It's a more inventive and all-around twacker album than *Broke-Dick-Dog*; at times, the two guitars shift into complete psycho rave-up mode and practically derail. And Arm sings his heart out. During an inspired cover of the Groundhogs' "Cherry Red," for instance, he draws out the word "please" to a full 13 seconds.

THE ELECTRIC VODKA ACID TEST

"You know, I'm getting really sick of not drinking," announces Price.

The waiter finally notices his empty glass. It's early afternoon at Seattle's

Cyclops cafe, where Price and his three Seattle-based bandmates are celebrating the demise of the Kingdom over Bloody Marys. They'd all watched the Dome vanish in a blast of dust that morning and had been reveling ever since. Tim Kerr is at home in Austin during this time, presumably sober.

Rocket: So since you've been gone we've all been led astray, at least according to your lyrics in "Solar Revelations" from *Electric Children*. What did you mean by that, Mark?

Arm: I have no idea what that means. It's just a reference to what's been going on musically I guess, "post-rock."

Turner: Not that we necessarily want to champion "The Rock," the new rock. There has to be some human emotion behind it.

Bland: Irony has already had its day.

Arm: But sarcasm hasn't!

Rocket: I think that's why bands like the Hellacopters are getting so much attention right now, because people are sick of irony and cleverness; they just wanna rock out.

Turner: I don't have the [same] faith in rock that those people do, though. I feel the same way about rock music as I did in the mid-'80s, since Green River. I feel no need to do anything original. If you do by accident that's the only way it usually happens anyway.

Price: Having said [we're] tired of irony, I think there's a fair amount of irony in the new album, particularly in the cover art. I'm just saying I'm sick of irony, but I'm not claiming to be innocent.

Rocket: Well, I think it's stupid when bands who've been around forever are still pretending to be innocent teenagers who just discovered rock 'n' roll.

Price: However, on the cover of our new album, Steve is pretending to be a 22-year-old college student who just discovered LSD. (*Electric Children's cover depicts Steve in white jeans, a cowboy hat and what appear to be puka shells. He looks so hot!*)

Bland: One thing I want to stress is, we dress up in these funny clothes, but it's not fake shit. Working with Tim you can't fake it, it's 100 percent.

Price: On the first album, I was so in awe of Tim Kerr as a guitar player; he was one of my favorite guitar players. I was like, "Here I am in a band with Tim Kerr, oh, my God; I'm just gonna do my job and be a sideman." I've since learned that he's not a god.

Turner: He is a higher being, though.

GODS AND MONSTERS

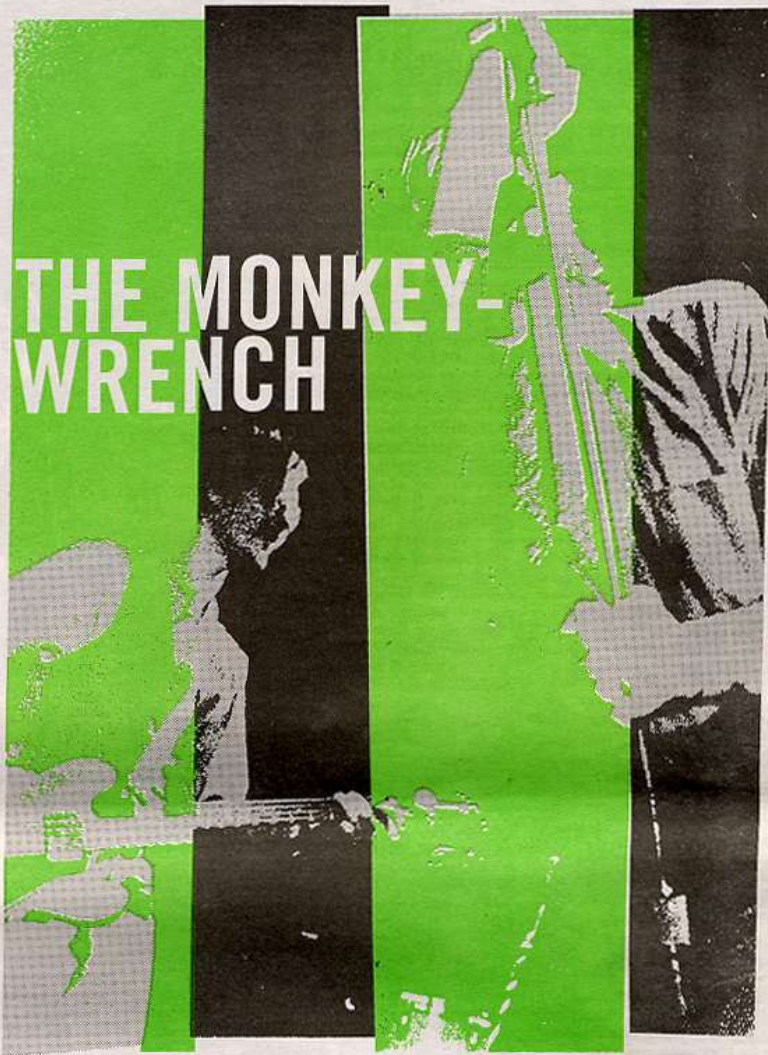
I phone Tim Kerr a couple days later at his Austin home to ask him if he's indeed a god. He denies it at first, but goes on to say that anyone can become god if they listen to enough jazz.

"Tom would hate that," he says. "He doesn't wanna have anything to do with jazz. But [the Monkeywrench] is almost like free jazz, because it gets to the point where I get so into what I'm doing that I'm working on a whole other plane."

"The first practice [for the new album], I almost hit Tom in the head with the guitar and turned the amp over," he continues. "My hand was bleeding and I was laying on the floor panting."

Kerr says he cracked two of his guitars while recording *Electric Children* last November, one during "Cherry Red," the other during the CD's eight-minute-plus finale, "In the Days of the Five."

"I just get so into what I'm doing and what I'm playing it's almost like a spiritual thing. It gets to the point where I don't even pay attention to what I'm doing to the guitar because I'm so into trying to get even more out of it than what is actually coming out."



THE MONKEY-WRENCH

CHIPS OFF THE OLD ROCK

By Dawn Anderson

INCIDENTALLY

You may be interested to know that Mudhoney haven't really broken up after all. Bassist Matt Lukin is out of the band, but the other three (including drummer Dan Peters) will enter the studio soon to record a few new songs with Turner on bass. Gas Huffer are still together, too, despite having been inactive for a lengthy spell. They'll record a new album soon, but don't plan to tour.

As for Bland, his brain is percolating with sinister schemes. "I've got theories about optometrists," he says mysteriously. "I've got theories about dentists. It's all going to be incorporated in my next musical project."

When the rest of the band attempts to laugh him off he says, "Never your mind. When you hear it, you'll be sorry." To which Arm responds, "Why, because we're hearing it?"

BUT THIS IS A MONKEYWRENCH STORY...

Rocket: What is psychedelia?

Arm: Acid.

Turner: It doesn't mean acid to me, it

means trying to mimic acid. With a lot of music I like, like the '60s garage bands, a lot of those people never touched a drug.

Arm: Oh, I bet they did.

Turner: I've never done LSD.

Arm: Oh, dude!

Price: We've got to dose him and put [the Dead Kennedys'] *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* on the turntable. It starts speeding up and going faster and faster if you're on acid. It's a great LSD album.

Arm: The most psychedelic album I've ever heard is *Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing* by Discharge, but that's only because I was peaking severely when I heard it.

Turner: But the Meat Puppets would back him up on that. They would also answer Discharge, because it's pure white noise that's totally vision inspiring.

Rocket: Martin, what does "psychedelic" mean to you?

Bland: I'll have to get back to you on that, because it's fairly important.

Rocket: Psychedelia's important? Why?

Bland: [Long silence]

Arm: It's too important for words.

STOP ROCK 'N' ROLL

Rocket: What's the biggest enemy of rock 'n' roll?

Price: Um, marriage. My wife is seven months pregnant. I'm totally stoked on that fact and on being married and having a kid coming up, but I think I'll stand by that statement.

Bland: The biggest enemy of rock 'n' roll is rock 'n' roll. And the people who play it.

Turner: The whole industry [is an enemy]. There are many enemies of rock 'n' roll, and I'm glad there are many enemies of rock 'n' roll.

Rocket: Why?

Arm: Because it should be defeated.

Price: We'll defeat it!

THE MONKEYWRENCH play EJ's in Portland 4/27; two shows at the Crocodile Cafe in Seattle 4/28 (6pm all-ages, 10pm 21-and-over); the 3-B Tavern in Bellingham, WA 4/29 and the Starfish Room in Vancouver, B.C. 4/30.