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AN INTERVIEW WITH **IAN MACKAYE**

OF THE EVENS

TIM KERR
OF THE BIG BOYS

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Abstract Fantasy Comics • Bands On The Rise
Record and Book Reviews • Poetry



interview

THE BIG BOY FROM PFLUGERVILLE

AN INTERVIEW
WITH TIM KERR
INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS
BY TODD TAYLOR
ARTWORK BY TIM KERR

G O START YOUR OWN BAND. GO WRITE YOUR OWN ZINE. PARTICIPATE. Don't wait for it to come to you. Create it. Make a scene. Use your hands. Use your brain. Dance. Do it for yourself. Have fun. Freak out the squares. Wanna be a star? Apply elsewhere.

That was the essential message of the Big Boys, a band I first came across in the late '80s in high school, years after they'd broken up. Their primal bursts of energy of "if you don't do it, don't complain" was right at the epicenter of now-classic punk; they were compadres, long-distance musical neighbors, and mutual supporters of Black Flag, the Minutemen, and Minor Threat. Yet, it wasn't a game of emulation. This Austin, Texas quartet fused hardcore, funk, and skaterock, and in a swirling palette of unapologetic "that'd usually get you killed in Texas"-isms, made all those labels essentially useless. I mean, who cares about the wrapper when it's what's inside that's important, you know?

Right now, if you want to get a crash course on a band that you may have overlooked, both *The Skinny Elvis* and *The Fat Elvis* and the re-released, enhanced *Wreck Collection* are easy to get, and figuring I've played them hundreds of times already over the years, are pennies-on-the-dollar brilliant.

The guitar player for the Big Boys, Tim Kerr, hasn't ever stopped. Twenty-plus years later and guess what? Those ideas and slogans he yelled at the top of his lungs when he was just starting out, about everyone being equal, about the power of positive production? He still lives by them. He's one of the most humble, supportive, and talented people I've ever had the pleasure of coming across. Whatever he sets his mind, body, and soul to — from producing (a term he doesn't really like) leagues of records, playing in bands (from Jack O'Fire, Bad Mutha Goose, Lord High Fixers, and currently Total Sound Group Direct Action Committee), and painting — it's hard to not just smile that one of the good guys continues to live and inspire by example.

—T. TAYLOR

DID THE FORMATION OF THE BIG BOYS —AND EVERYONE INVOLVED SKATING — CENTER AROUND THE PFLUGERVILLE DITCH?

Yeah, but there was stuff going on before Pflugerville. We all didn't really know, yet, how to do those "forevers." We were more into going to places that were going down a hill. There was a ditch in Georgetown that we would always go to. If you knew how to forever...

EXPLAIN WHAT A FOREVER IS.

A ramp's a really great example. In a ramp — when you're pumping back and forth to keep your speed up — it's this thing you do with your weight and your legs. It's one of those things, too, where you couldn't ever really explain it to somebody. You could show them. Even when you sat there and saw how it was done, it's just unbelievably the hardest thing to do, until, all of a sudden, you had it. Then it was so easy that you were embarrassed at how hard you thought it

was. I think everybody went through that.

SAME THING WITH DROPPING IN.

Yeah. But a forever is, basically, where you can keep your speed up on a flat thing with walls. We would always go to Georgetown, and it had this ditch that went a pretty good, long ways down a hill. It dropped into a whole bunch of cement walls coming in [at] different angles, and this crazy overpass thing that came down. That's pretty much where we went all the time and would pass by Pflugerville. We actually stopped at Pflugerville once and decided "this sucks." Nobody even knew the concept of pumping yet. It's unbelievably hard to explain to people now about skating or punk rock or any of that stuff back then — you're talking '75, '76 — people had no fucking clue what was going on. First, it was like, "Those are back again?" "How old are you? Grow up." Unbelievable amounts of shit you would get. People just did not have a clue. It's hard for

people to understand how under the radar all of this stuff was because now, it's everywhere, everybody knows now. You see it on TV. The Big Boys just kind of met through all of that, just skating in the hills and skating at a bunch of different places. Once the whole forever thing started up, then everybody started congregating at Pflugerville all the time, because that place was really great. [It] had lips, and you could lipslide and do all kinds of crazy stuff. That's where we would all skate.

DO YOU STILL SKATE AND SURF ACTIVELY?

Skate and surf? I haven't skated very much since I broke my leg last year, because I really need to strengthen it back up before I start running on cement again. Surfing: I try and go. I haven't done a whole lot, especially like I used to, but I definitely try to go. The bad thing about Texas waves is that when there are waves in Texas, there are waves for as far out as you can see. Constantly having to paddle. You really have to be in pretty damn good shape.

ON THE COASTS, AT LEAST YOU CAN REST BETWEEN SETS.

Right. I'm working on it slowly, trying to get my stamina back up to where I can surf a whole lot more. I really miss that a lot.

HERE'S A QUESTION I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO, AND IT SEEMS LIKE A REALLY OBVIOUS ONE. WHERE DID THE BIG BOYS GET THEIR NAME?

There was this party that was happening at The Vault, which was actually an old fur vault with a great, big, huge metal door that was the only door in and out of this place. We were always kidding that if anybody ever shut that door when these parties were going on, they'd pretty much kill off punk rock in Austin, Texas. Basically, somebody asked me if we wanted to play this big party. There were 15 bands... And I said, "Maybe so." They said, "What's your band's name?" I remembered one of the names on the list was Big Boys and it was mainly for Biscuit [singer] and Chris [bass] because they were big guys and I said that. We hadn't really decided yet. Literally, I think within two nights, Beth [Tim's wife] and I were walking down the drag and there were posters up for this party and Big Boys was listed. Seriously, the first thing out of both of our minds and mouths was, "Oh shit, somebody's got that name." Then we kinda realized, "Oh shit, that's us. We're supposed to play." That's basically where the name came from. We had a big, long list of names. I can't even remember them at all. I think we had practiced maybe twice... Chris Gates and me literally [flipped] a coin at

Pflugerville to see who would play guitar or bass. He pretty much played guitar exactly how Junkyard ended up being and I played guitar like, crazy tunings and acoustic—John Martin, Nick Drake, and all that kind of stuff. So, I got guitar when we flipped the coin and he got bass.

[BIGBOYS] WASN'T FROM THE ELVIS COSTELLO SONG, OFF OF ARMED FORCES?

No. I didn't even think about that until you just said that. Jack O' Fire wasn't for that Gun Club song either, which was another one I didn't even think about until somebody brought up that.

DID YOU GUYS EVER GET MISTAKEN FOR, OR GET CALLED THE FAT BOYS?

No. Once again, this was a really small community, and if you got any sort of ridicule at all, it was pretty much frats or the majority of the outside world who had no idea what this was. In their narrow-minded, safe little world, you and your friends, whether it was skating or punk rock, were basically called "faggot" or whatever else they could come up with. If somebody was yelling out "fat boy," it wasn't really any big deal, considering all the other shit you'd get, or had thrown at you. There was one time during Bad Mutha Goose, where this band in San Antonio went on as The Pig Boys and thought that was really funny, and I guess they were trying to get my goat up. It didn't bother me. I didn't really care one way or the other. I think, in the long run, I probably won that one.

TO DILATE THIS A LITTLE BIT MORE OPEN, YOU START OUT WITH A SMALL, VERY DEDICATED, AND LOYAL LOCAL COMMUNITY. HOW DID THE BIG BOYS GET ON THE SKATEROCK COMP, BLAZING WHEELS AND BARKING TRUCKS? HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH SKATEBOARDING MAGAZINES AND BEGIN TO INTERACT MORE NATIONALLY?

Back then, the only skate magazine that was really coming out was *Skateboarder*. Then — this one people will argue about, but I remember it being Steve Olson — here comes the first person I see in *Skateboarder* that was kind of like, "Uh, oh, here comes punk rock into skateboarding. Cool." All of us were already listening to that stuff. I remember that happening, and then I remember *Thrasher* coming out. When *Thrasher* first came out, the first three or four issues were kind of like a big fanzine. It wasn't like, "Ooh, you bought this at the supermarket." It's not a big magazine like *Skateboarder* was. It looks like something me and you put out, which is exactly what it was. The first time the Big

Boys went to California, we got in touch with them, and not to be in the magazine either. Even at that point, there wasn't anything that was going to happen with this "punk rock hardcore" other than you get to meet a whole bunch of people and the community of it. That was basically your reward: self-expression and having a great time. When we went, we [said], "Hey, let's write these guys, 'cause when we're in San Francisco, let's find out where the ditches are." We would do the same thing if someone was coming here. That's another reason why the skating thing and the punk thing connected—because they were both a community like that at that time. Everybody



was sleeping on each other's floors. "Oh man, we found this pool at so-and-so's. C'mon down here to Austin and we'll show you where it's at and let's go skate." Camaraderie and community. Punk was a lot like that back then because all those bands were staying at each other's houses and on their floors.

IT WAS A MUCH MORE CLOSED CIRCUIT.

As big as the United States is, it was a really close-knit scene. Everybody knew what was going on. If you happened to put on a show and you were a total fuck up, I guarantee you, the next day, pretty much the country would know about it: "Don't deal with this guy. He just stole this much money." It was really super connected. With us, being skaters first and then doing this stuff, it was really natural to think... "Oh, look, here's this fanzine *Thrasher*, let's write these guys." They wrote back. We went up

there. Met MoFo and Kevin. Went around to some places, went skating, had a great time. The next thing that happened was MoFo started up those comics: *Wild Riders of Boards*. It's supposedly about us, but it was a made-up story. I really, really think that MoFo was the first person to say "skaterock." We were all skaters that were in this band. It wasn't like this band was skate-rock. It's just that skating was just as much a part of our lives as playing music. We didn't really have any songs about skating. We maybe started getting written about first, but JFA, to me, was the first skaterock band because they were the first ones to come out, [declaring] "We're skaterock." Whereas we were like, "We're skaters and we play this." I'm not saying that that's a bad thing.

FOR ME, JFA FLEW THE SKATING FLAG A LITTLE BIT HIGHER THAN YOU GUYS DID.

Once *Thrasher* started doing these articles — because there really was a lot of people who skated back then that were in the scene of punk rock, too — everybody saw the opportunity to be in *Thrasher*, then you really did start to have a lot of people going. "We skate. We rock. We're a skate-rock band." It didn't really faze us at all. It kinda pissed off JFA, though, so Brian wrote this letter to *Thrasher* and it basically was a challenge. "Okay, all you bands who say you're skaterock, I challenge you, in a pool or the ditch."

HE THREW DOWN THE GAUNTLET.

Literally, that's what it was. Calling you down. So, when they came here, this was right after he had sent the letter and we were not aware of the challenge yet. I remember taking them to Pflugerville. That was the first thing we did. "All those guys skate, we all skate. Let's go." They really weren't skating. They were kinda hanging back and we're taking off, sliding all over the place and going crazy. I kept thinking it was probably because they were kind of scared to drop in or whatever. I found out later, what it was, they were checking us out. They were making sure that we skated.

THEY WERE TESTING YOUR METTLE.

Of course, we passed the test. I never knew anything about that until after that letter came out. We started laughing.

EVER PULLED AN EMBARRASSING MOVE SKATING?

We went to this ditch in Selma, just this really great ditch outside of San Antonio, and it was the first time I had ever skated anything that big or that kind of a ditch. When you showed up — the overpass of the

highway kind of dropped into this ditch — and when we got there, I was looking around and somebody had spray-painted "Monster Hole." Right by where the highway was, it [said], "Drop in here." I was looking at the whole thing saying, "Well, this ain't that big," and I went up to the fucking top of that thing and dropped down. I was pretty much gonna make it, but I didn't realize the lip. When I hit that lip, it just flung me to the other side of the ditch and I literally slammed into it face-first. I was really embarrassed and felt really stupid, but the craziest thing about it — and this is the only time this has ever happened to me — [was that] I literally saw stars. My friend had come running over, like, "Tim, are you alright? Are you okay?" I was looking over at him, and I didn't really want to freak him out, and I'm real embarrassed, but I'm trying to figure out, "Okay, which one of you do I talk to? There's three of you and I've got to figure out which one to focus on and say, 'I'm okay.'"

SHIFTING FOCUS A LITTLE BIT. IT'S 2005. WHY IS IT STILL IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE START THEIR OWN BANDS, DO THEIR OWN SCENES, PROMOTE THEIR OWN CULTURE?

You get more out of life if you participate in what is going on and do things... You're planting seeds around people, because everybody is an influence to somebody else. They just are. Whether it's a good influence or a bad influence, that's kind of beside the point. At some point, you're going to influence somebody. I'm not saying that in a pretentious sort of way or anything. That's just human nature. That's just life.

THAT'S PART OF STICKING YOUR NECK OUT, TOO.

If I'm going to influence anybody at all, I want to be a positive influence. The only way that you can be a positive influence on somebody is participating in things and doing stuff and walking your walk. If I couldn't do any sort of self-expression at all, then I would definitely be there to support what was going on. That's a big part of it, too—supporting and celebrating people who are sticking their necks out, although, I'm not sure if I look at it that way: sticking your neck out. To me it's just living and being yourself and doing what you do.

IT BECOMES SECOND NATURE.

It's exactly like skating. When you're in a pool, you're not thinking of the danger of it. It's just: "This is great." Pretty much expressing yourself. If something happens, if somebody throws a rock at your head when you're playing the guitar or if somebody wants to

fight you or if you lock up on the gutter and you fall and you break something, then, well, that's the danger, but that's not stopping you. You're not thinking of it in those terms, though I guarantee you that there are some people who do think like that. Once again, to each his own. I'm not going to stand on a soapbox. I'm also not going to stand on a soapbox and ask the question, "Why do people stop?" We definitely all have friends who say, "Music stopped in '78," or, "Music stopped with Hüsker Dü's last album."



"R.E.M. That's when it stopped." And they don't listen anymore. It's really sad to me. They're really missing out. I've made this analogy thousands of times, but it's literally like going to the cafeteria and ordering the one thing every time you go or going to some restaurant and never trying anything else, never even noticing the connections between anything else. All that stuff, to me, is sad. I think one of the main things you learn, if you're aware of it when you get older, is that there's a whole lot more of "them" than "us." So when you meet all these different people, hug 'em, celebrate

'em, because there ain't a lot.

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST SKATING INJURY, THE THING THAT SIDELINED YOU FOR A WHILE?

I'm pretty sure it was '76, could've been '75, but I'm pretty sure it was '76. I had won this singer-songwriter thing and I was supposed to play in Kerrville, and I broke my arm skating in this 14-foot-deep pool in a big ol' country club pool, and I was skating barefoot. It had a gutter and this weird tile that had like a tile coping on it and then the cement coping. Basically, we were riding it all day, and then a friend of mine drove up and I was like, "I'm gonna show off." I pushed off a lot harder than I'd been pushing before and basically came out and went back in, which didn't have a name at that time, and when I came back down, my wheels were so small and worn down that they locked up in the gutter. I pretty much swear to this day that I ran all the way down the wall and then slipped at the very bottom, but everybody said that I looked like I was surfing and dove from the top. I pretty much crushed my left arm, definitely a good chunk of it. There are plates in my arm, and I obviously didn't play Kerrville. It was pretty bad. I was in a cast for three months or something. All of that is pretty funny, because we're talking '76. Skating back then was just as bad as when punk rock first started and you had a blue mohawk. When I showed up at the hospital, the doctor said, "You mean you were skating on the sidewalk and you fell into the pool?" They just couldn't comprehend it at all. I was in art school at that time and this friend of mine was doing silkscreen, and I'm not sure how he did it, but he got the x-rays. Basically, he had the picture of me carving across the tile silkscreened with the sky being the x-ray with the plates and the screws all in my arm.

FOR ALL THE NEGATIVE ELEMENTS THAT PEOPLE ASSOCIATE WITH PUNK ROCK, ESPECIALLY FROM THE OUTSIDE, TO STAY SANE, YOU HAVE TO CELEBRATE THE GOOD STUFF. YOU HAVE TO HAVE FUN. YOU HAVE TO SPAZZ OUT.

We never saw any negative stuff in it. That was all them seeing that shit. That's their problem.

I THINK IT'S A REALLY INTERESTING IDEA WHAT YOU'RE DOING WITH REINTRODUCING THEATER-IN-THE-ROUND FOR PLAYING SHOWS. [ED. NOTE: "THEATER-IN-THE-ROUND" IS WHEN A PERFORMANCE TAKES PLACE IN THE CENTER OF THE AUDIENCE.] CAN YOU TAKE US THROUGH IT, LIKE WHEN DID YOU

FIRST COME UPON THE IDEA, AND HOW IS IT DEVELOPING?

It comes from the idea of "Who made the rules?" Who made the rule that the band stands here, the crowd stands here? You as a musician play your instrument like this; the crowd does this. It's all this etiquette that, basically, everybody has. The first time you walk into a show, you don't know what the rules are, you don't have any expectations at all, and those are usually pretty great shows. Most people can remember the first time that they went to one of these shows, and it's because of that, because your senses are working overtime. You weren't in a familiar place, you weren't familiar with what's going on, all that stuff, but then what happens is that, over time, you fall into that line, like the total sheep thing, if that makes any sense. In reality, most of all that stuff is pretty much self-implicit. It turns it into this kinda philosophical thing, where if the original rule was self-implicit, then that means you make the rules. So hang on, if we can make the rules here, we're changing stuff. Does that make sense?

IT MAKES TOTAL SENSE, BECAUSE AT ONE POINT, YOU'RE VERY IMPRESSIONABLE, BUT IF THAT IMPRESSION DOESN'T CHANGE, IT BECOMES A ROUTINE.

It's like Guy [Picciotto] says in that Fugazi thing [the movie *Instrument*]: it becomes clothes, something you put on. You can go to shows and there's lots of crazy stuff going on: people can be hanging from the rafters or set the drums on fire, whatever, but then it's just like, "Next band." It's just such a routine going to those places. You go to the bar, you drink, talk to your friends, first band plays, boom boom boom. I wouldn't say that it's boring, but it's real predictable, and real regimented. Even if the band is over-the-top crazy, you're still in a situation that's fairly regimented, and you as an audience are regimented into that costume. The best analogy I can think of is, every once in a while, they'll have day shows, and at the day shows, everybody just kinda feels uncomfortable. And your perspective kinda changes. It's like that. It's weird because it's not being preachy, it's not pointing fingers. I've played in clubs many a time, and I'm sure I'll be playing in many more when it comes around. But with us, it's "been there, done that." It's awful to say that because it sounds like you're pointing fingers or you're above somebody, but it's not coming from that at all. It's just like, "Wait a minute, hold on here. Who *did* make these rules? Shit, I don't want to do that, I want to do this."

We're definitely not doing anything new. There have been bands that have done this kind of stuff, but it's just the whole idea of, "Well, instead of setting up on the floor in front of the stage, where you'd still have that wall where the people are in front of the band and the band can only really move left, right, or forward, why don't we just take it out to the center of the floor? We can move in whatever direction we want to move and people can go wherever they want to go and see us." Lightning Bolt kinda does that, and they take it a little further and move around while they're playing. That's great. It's what this was about to begin with, not accepting what's been given to you but doing something else with it. It's not in a "fuck you" sort of way, but more like, "Hey, here's another way to do this." That's pretty much what it stems from. But in doing it, I'll tell you, the thing that's been really amazing to me is that out of all these years of playing in clubs, doing what

"PLAYING IS A WAY TO HELP. IT'S ALL, HOPEFULLY, HELPING PEOPLE AND HAVING A GREAT TIME AT THE SAME TIME."

everybody does, this is the best I've been able to hear, period, as far as the band and hearing Mike singing. Even if the monitors in the club are really great, you might hear the vocals real loud or you can't hear the organ. Setting up like this, it's almost like you're at practice, except that you've got a really fucking great PA.

HOW MANY SHOWS HAVE YOU DONE LIKE THAT?

We've done two. We haven't played that much since we started back up. The first show, we played outside at this compound thing with Gorch Fock, and Gorch Fock built a big ol' pirate ship and played on that. It was fuckin' great. Pretty typical Austin kinda thing. The second time was Denver, and it was definitely an old theater with weird levels, and we could tell right off that if we tried to pull this, it was just going to be a whole lot more trouble than it was worth. There were all these guys running around barking orders, so we went ahead and did the regular thing, except for us, it's not necessarily regular. But

then when we played Beerland, we just set up right at the dead center of the place. There was actually a lot of room and it was pretty great because the first band finished and people are standing around talking and all of a sudden, you're going, "Excuse me, I'm setting up right here." I don't think it's something we're going to do every time, but any time we can or any time we think it's worth the fight, that's definitely what we're gonna do. It just seems so much more like you're in a party or something. That's another side to it: when you're a band and you're playing at a house party as opposed to a club, it's so much more fun.

WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING MUSIC, AT WHAT TIME DO YOU THINK, "I'D LIKE TO DO SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE BEHIND THE SCENES," LIKE PRODUCING OR WORKING A SOUNDBOARD? WHEN DID THAT FIRST COME INTO PLAY?

I was always doing it when we would go in and record. Me and Chris [Gates] both were always there the whole time. Once again, it's all the same to me. Skating, surfing, playing music, painting, producing, all this kind of stuff, it's all the same. I don't really think of it as "behind the scenes." I think of it as, "Well, this is just another way to help." Playing is a way to help. It's all, hopefully, helping people and having a great time at the same time. You start realizing it ain't that hard if you just work. I guess, to some people, it would be hard, but if it's something that's you and you feel pretty great about it, it's like me painting up there. I never think of that as work. I never think about practicing the guitar, I just play the guitar all the time. When that's happening and you really enjoy it, it's not hard. It's not work. You get better because you are doing it and you start realizing all of these other crazy opportunities. "Shit, maybe I could start a band. Maybe I could start a fanzine." You start realizing how it affects other people. Not necessarily that you're doing it for that, but you kind of understand that.

YOU GET A WHEEL THAT'S MUCH BIGGER THAN YOU ROLLING. YOU DON'T CONTROL HOW FAST IT SPINS, BUT YOU'RE DEFINITELY CONNECTED TO IT.

And there's definitely a responsibility there, and I'm not saying you have the weight of the world on your shoulders or anything like that. It's either that you are the type of person who stands up to the responsibility and doesn't make excuses for yourself, or you're the kind of person who makes excuses. Back to the question: me and Chris were always a part of the recording process, [even] if it was just

watching and learning. Probably in the late '80s, friends started to ask, "Hey, would you come in with us and make sure this engineer isn't pulling stuff?" or this, that, and the other.

CAN YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME?

Not really. There was a band here called Four Front [with] Josh, who was in Jack O'Fire, The Sevens. Really, really great human being. Super, super nice. He can play anything. You wish you could play one thing as well as he can play anything. Right around that time, I remember them asking. I remember there was a band called The Cavemen that actually asked me to just come sit with them and do a home recording. Stuff like that. I remember the first [time] that somebody said, "Hey, we're going to give you money and we want to put you on the record as being the producer," which, to this day, I'm still super uncomfortable with that label. I'm super uncomfortable with "musician," "vegetarian," "producer." All that kind of label stuff has got so much fucking baggage attached to it that is not me at all. I'm just there to be sort of the coach. I'm here to help. I'm not your typical producer and don't care to be. To this day, I don't really charge. I pretty much let people pay me what they want to pay me or what they can afford. I have a job working for the university. I never, ever wanted any kind of self-expression to be something that I had to count on for money. I'm not stupid. I'm not going to turn money down, but I don't want that to be a decision-maker. At this point right now, I know I could quit the library and easily live off of going and recording all of these bands, but I don't want to be saying at the end of a month, "Oh shit, we need the rent. Okay. I'll do that band." Instead, I'm doing things that I really like. You have to be a workaholic, but I enjoy doing it, so it doesn't seem like work to me. Anyway, so they were going to pay me. I was like, "Oh my god. I don't know if I know what the hell I'm doing." Plus, it's one of things, too, where it really is a crazy job. Any kind of self-expression: art, music, any of this stuff, is all completely subjective. People hear something their own way and that's just as valid as the person sitting by you. If somebody had the inside key to this shit, they'd be a millionaire. They'd be the one making all the hits. It's just a really odd thing to me to get asked to walk in there, give my opinion, and basically go, "Oh, that's kind of cool. Why don't you do it slower?" Then to actually get paid, that's fairly embarrassing. It's just really odd. It took a little while, but I understand now; I don't think I'm the best. I don't think anything like that at all, but I'm good at it. I know that. I can say that now and I'll probably still wince if I see it written. I know the reason why it's like that is

because I've been around doing this for a long time, and, from day one, listening to anything and everything. In one day, I usually listen to Aaron Copeland, Anthony Braxton, Black Flag, just all kinds of fucking shit and I really think that if somebody does want to do this for a living, that's something they should start doing, because it really gives you a lot broader musical vocabulary when bands come in and are asking you, "Well, what do you think?" It's like reviewing a band. Most people who review bands—and this sounds awful—their musical vocabulary is fairly narrow, so they don't really understand that Aaron Copeland might be in this. It's that whole thing of participating and doing stuff. You're gonna get more out of life and be a broader person if you really open up to everything, and I'm not saying that you have to like everything, but I'm just saying listen to everything — see everything, smell everything — the palette gets a whole lot bigger.

I'M TRYING TO BROADEN WHAT I LISTEN TO. I LISTENED TO BOBBIE VEE THE OTHER DAY. I FOUND A RECORD FOR A QUARTER. I REALLY DIDN'T LIKE IT. WHAT'S THE OTHER SIDE TO THAT? HAVE YOU EVER GONE TOO FAR AND SAID, "MAN, I REALLY DON'T LIKE THIS. I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS" AND FINDING YOURSELF REELING YOUR MUSICAL TASTES BACK A LITTLE? IS IT CONSTANTLY EXPANDING OR DOES IT OSCILLATE?

It kind of goes back and forth, but it's pretty much expanding all of the time. A really great example of this: think about the first time you heard punk rock. Or think about the first time you heard Tex Mex music, or classical. It all sounded the same. I'm not saying that in a bad sort of way. It's just a fact. When you first hear stuff—when you hear crazy metal, it all sounds the same. So, either you're the type of person who keeps listening and realize, "I don't really like that, but I like this. That's pretty cool. That's real neat what they're doing there. Does somebody else do something like that?" That's how it starts. Does that make sense? Instead of doing something like, "Metal? Fuck that shit," because you've heard it once or twice and you just write it off. There are definitely things that I'm not that much into, but, at the same time, I'm still at least going to be open enough to hear what's somebody's saying or what they're doing. Another good example of this is paintings. If somebody came up and said, "Instead of red right there, why don't you put blue right there?" Well, to me, [it's] cool if you're going to say that. I may not agree with you, and I may not like the color you're talking about there, and I may think you're full of shit, but at the same time, I'm like, "I don't really like that, but blue might be kinda cool over there."

It's this open dialogue. As corny as this sounds, life should be an open dialogue. You should be teaching and learning the whole time.

WHEN YOU'RE FORCED TO SLOW DOWN — SOMETIMES WITH AN INJURY, MENTALLY OR PHYSICALLY — AND SHIFT YOUR CREATIVE ENERGIES, YOU HAVE A QUIVER OF THINGS YOU CAN DO. "WELL, IF I CAN'T RIDE MY SKATEBOARD FOR A BIT, I'LL READ MORE."

I really hadn't painted. I drew covers. I painted little things, magazine things, ads or for posters for shows, and I've always been doing that, but I hadn't really gotten paint out and started slinging that all around until, literally, this year. Once I started, it was like, "Man, I forgot how much I'd enjoyed doing this." It's the same thing with skating. There was about a year period when I really didn't skate. There was too much else going on. It wasn't because I was getting older. So, when I finally went again, it was, "This is great. I totally forgot how much fun this is. I'm not stopping again." Same thing with painting. I've been trying to average one or two a week.

YOU AND BETH HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR A LONG, LONG TIME. HOW'D YOU TWO MEET?

She's two years older than me. We went to the same elementary school, and she knew me because I was the librarian's kid, but I didn't know her because when you're in elementary school or junior high, you don't really know anybody that's not in your class. I met her when I was a freshman in high school, and we were just complete best friends, no sex, nothing, just brother and sister. She has an older brother and sister that are a lot older than her and I have two older brothers that are a lot older than me, like eight and ten years older, so we were kinda in the same boat as far as that. I think that might have been one of the attractions of the friendship. We went all the way until the summer that I was getting ready to be a senior in high school, and at the end of the summer when she was going back to college, she had kinda figured out in college that age didn't really have anything to do with anything. So she wrote me this big letter and we were together from then on. We started living together when I graduated in '74, after that summer. Then we got married in '78, and we've pretty much been together the whole time.

DO YOU THINK IT GIVES YOU A LOT OF EMOTIONAL STABILITY?

I think you have to have some emotional stability to keep a relationship going that long. I think that it's definitely a comfort and it's nice, but I also think that you kinda have to have it to live with somebody that long and work all the things out. **WE**