

Punkers 7Seconds fight positive battle, fan indifference at rowdy Houston show

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

HOUSTON — Forward progress appears to be the catch phrase for 7Seconds.

The former straight edgers have turned to the more passive confines of positive punk, a format that still claims social rights, racial harmony and a clean lifestyle as its main objectives.

During their Houston stop at Fitzgerald's last Tuesday, lead singer and guitarist Kevin Seconds, bassist Steve Youth, drummer Troy Mowatt and lead guitarist Chris Carnahan took another musical step forward with their hour-and-ten-minute set that unveiled five upcoming tracks from their January-scheduled release.

By far, the new material stole the night. While standbys such as "99 Red Balloons" (yes, the Nena song), "Seven Years" and "Walk Together, Rock Together" received the loudest applause, it was new tracks, "Naked," "Weakness Coming," "Come," "Backwards" and "Happy Rain" that showcased 7Seconds at its strongest.

Judging from the five tracks, 7Seconds is bridging the melodic structures of their last three albums with an edge more reminiscent of middle period works such as *Walk Together, Rock Together* and *New Wind*.

While not approaching the music speed or aggression of early releases such as *The Crew* or *Skins, Brains and Guts*, the new numbers cut a hard, positive edge that has been lacking on their past three albums.

Likewise, the addition of Chris Carnahan on guitar has been a positive step forward. Carnahan resembles singer Seconds with his vibrant, constant activity onstage.

Together, Carnahan, Seconds and Youth are a wild, wacky line of pogoing, thrashing fools that keep the audience involved and active. The wackiness, crowd interaction and constant motion has transformed 7Seconds into one of the most enjoyable bands to watch.

Case in point was the group's stab at the B-52's "Roam," a song that could emerge as another classic 7Seconds cover like "99 Red Balloons."

When 7Seconds recorded and performed "99 Red Balloons," most hardcore fans couldn't believe they were serious.

They were. Disregarding the notion that hardcore must correlate with nihilism and depression, 7Seconds realized they had a purpose as positive straight edgers to emphasize the upbeat and optimistic. "Roam" definitely needs a little work, but the enthusiasm and fun was there.

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The unfortunate part of 7Seconds' performance was the usual crowd b.s. I admit the slamming and tensions are subsiding, but still, they exist. Instead of solidarity and harmony among the audience, the two main themes of 7Seconds' work, there is stupid violence and needless agitation.

Even anti-pit songs such as "Out of Touch" and "Seven Years" fail to drive into the heads of these wannabe punks and suburban jocks — looking to vent the repressed anger of a failed high school sports dream — that the true straight edge groups disclaimed slamming and violence years ago.

Slamming has to be one of the most retarded social exercises ever sustained, and the suburban jocks have unwittingly teamed with the supremist groups to make it even stupider. For a hardcore lover like myself, it's distressing to watch the scene crumble in the hands of these goons. Violence is not the complement to hardcore, its the destruction of it.



Battalion File Photo

From left to right — Troy Mowatt, Steve Youth and Kevin Seconds are positive punkers with their group 7Seconds.

7Seconds stays positive with new LP, direction

By JOHN RIGHTER

7Seconds is arguably the most influential and important band from the '80s hardcore movement.

Fathers of the straight edge scene along with Minor Threat, 7Seconds developed a fast, powerful doctrine of racial harmony, human rights, peace and compassion.

The optimistic force of their messages were strengthened by their commitment to a drug and alcohol free life that placed the strength of the individual over the excesses of the populace.

As the band matured and went through many personnel changes, the core of lead singer and guitarist Kevin Seconds, bass player (and Seconds' brother) Steve Youth and drummer Troy Mowatt realized that something was wrong.

The positive messages of 7Seconds were being lost within the violence and racial incidents that occurred at their shows. The band claims the decision that message take precedence over music was made, and thus the group moved away from the music speed that attracted the various skinhead and fascist groups.

The decision to move beyond hardcore was solidified in 1986 with the release of *New Wind*, one of the most important albums of the decade. The significance of *New Wind* was the album's melodic, almost "pop" approach, and its explicit claim against the violence that had taken over hardcore.

Several years later, 7Seconds has finally carved a new identity as leaders of the more passive "positive punk" scene (an offshoot of straight edge). With a new guitarist (Chris Carnahan), a world tour supporting their most successful release yet, *Soulforce Revolution* and a new album on the way, Kevin Seconds is more optimistic than ever about the future of 7Seconds.

I spoke with Seconds (whose real name is Marvelli) last Tuesday night after their performance in Houston about the past, present and future of 7Seconds.

I really enjoyed the new material tonight. How far along are you on the next album, and how is it shaping up so far?

"We've finished about 12 or 13 songs that we will be ready to take into the studio after we get back from Europe (where they will be touring) later this summer. I'm really looking forward to doing the studio work on this next album 'cause the audience response has been so great. It's been a lot like *Soulforce Revolution* in that respect.

"The album itself will be much more charged with a lot more energy showing through it. It will still be real melodic, but with more of an edge to it, especially vocal wise."

I especially found the song "Naked" interesting. The title seems kind of deceiving, though.

"Yeah, it's meant to be that way. It's a song about stripping away all our masks. The main line is, 'Get naked. Strip your skin away, strip your skin away.' It mainly says that you get to a point where you realize there is a great human being underneath all that bullshit.

"It's getting to the good stuff in all people, which is a goal of 7Seconds. The title is kind of deceiving, though. But, I hope that makes people think even harder about what the song says."

What was it like working on 'New Wind,' a really radical album in a lot of ways? What was going through your heads at that time?

"We were just really anxious to move on. We got to a point where all of our shows felt... well not right. It was like all these people were saying, 'Oh well, the positive band, the positive straight edge and stuff.' But we felt really bunk 'cause there was so much fighting and shit going on. It was just ridiculous. So when we started practicing for what turned out to be *New Wind*, we found ourselves just jamming on the most exciting music we'd ever done. It had a lot more melody and was slowed down a little more.

"We never meant for people to take it like we were trying to become a pop band, some kind of U2 clone. Or that we were turning our backs on hardcore. It was just something that we had to do for ourselves. The time had come to move on and 'New Wind' was that first step."

What are your feelings about the straight edge movement nowadays? Are you proud it's being carried on by the groups in New York and elsewhere, or do you feel its time has come and gone?

"I'm all for the cool, honest edge, but I'm really kind of uncertain about what straight edge really is. I'm still straight edge, 'cause I don't drink, indulge in drugs and I'm not a racist or whatever. But I've never completely excepted it as a movement.

"I like the fact that it was and still is a good influence on people. But when it started becoming where people were telling each other what to do and coming off really self righteously... I couldn't deal with that.

"I saw my friends turning into these little, mini Hitlers. Friends that were really educated and in school would get a few people supporting their band and they would start to get all in your face about what they believe. I started to look at myself and say, 'Man, is this what I'm doing?' 'Cause it was the last thing I wanted to do."

I know this is an old question, but what are your feelings about the violence that still perpetuates at your shows? 7Seconds seemed to send a pretty strong message with 'New Wind' and 'Seven Years.' Has there been any change?

"For a while there, we were getting physically ill by the violence. Here we were singing songs about how people should love and treat each other, and people were just going completely off on one another on the dance floor. It was just insane. I can understand the kids wanting to have fun, but this was really getting pretty sick and stupid.

"You know, Ian (MacKaye of Fugazi) is great at controlling an audience, and people will listen to him. I suppose people would listen to me, but I've sort of refrained against speaking out. It's been a real tough struggle for me, 'cause I hate the violence.

"I've had people ask me, 'Why do you let the Nazis come to your shows.' I answer by saying, 'Cause I'm the kind of person who doesn't believe in censoring anybody.' If they come to our shows, and as long as they don't start f---in' people up... I don't like it, I hate it and I hate what they are saying, but I also believe they have a right to come in and do it.

"These other people say, 'That's bullshit. You're not sticking to what you believe in.' But I strive to understand and accept all people for what they are, no matter how f---ed up it may be and to not censor anyone. I just pray that the Nazis learn something positive from our shows. That's my goal."

Impressionistic "Goo" uncovers latest gem for industrial rockers Sonic Youth

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

The long awaited major-label release from one of the '80s most important and influential bands, "Goo" is the album that should raise New York's Sonic Youth to a commercial plane in line with the group's overwhelming critical acceptance.

Although more accessible than any previous release, "Goo" is still all Sonic Youth, chocked with layers of texture, i.e. feedback, guitar grunge and tape loops.

The album weaves its nonsensical, sometimes absurd lyrics in a crisscross of humor and psychedelic depression. From "Cinderella's Big Score" and "My Friend Goo" to "Mary-Christ" and "Tunic," Sonic Youth creates the perfect paradox: a distressing and downcast aura of "white noise" set to "Goo's" camp-filled lyrics.

Even the first single, "Kool Thing," is a tongue-in-cheek spoiler that teams bassist Kim Gordon with Public Enemy's Chuck D. in a bizarre tandem for female liberation "from male, white, corporate oppression." Gordon speils and twirls her fragmented lines in sultry, slutty fashion, while D. grunts and groans to ground out the song's shock sexuality.

"Kool thing sitting with the kitty," Gordon pouts, "now you know you sure are looking pretty. Like a lover, not a dancer. Sit boy, take a little chance here. I don't wanna. I don't think so."

Likewise, on "Tunic," a song about the experience of death,

Gordon coyly mutters about her impressions of Earth from Heaven and about her new group with Janis Joplin, Dennis Wilson and Elvis.

The lyrics are little more than interesting, but the depressing feel crafted from the Sonic's death dirge of slow-rocking guitars and distortion mixed with Gordon's sultry delivery, turns "Tunic" into a keenly descriptive and disturbing song.



Side one is rounded out with the heavy, ethereal "Mote." "Mote" is the album's strongest track, channeling guitarist Lee Ranaldo's voice through a modulator: "Now I have drawn a mote inside my eye. And I can see you breathing as before. I

am Ellis, a vacuum child. And I can't stand to reason at your door."

What few shots Sonic Youth takes at accessibility on side one are forsaken on side two, a side as unconventional as any for Sonic Youth. The assistance of outside contributors J. Mascis of Dinosaur Jr. and Don Fleming of the Velvet Monkeys help purge the Sonics from any thoughts of major-label sell out.

Sound walls of tape loops, distortion and grunge fill side two, with the industrial bangings of "Mildred Pierce," and the "white noise" effects of "Scooter and Jinx" being especially interesting.

Sonic Youth is meant for the imagination, for dream time. They are impressionism for the '90s.

"Goo's" lyrics are urban-guerilla nursery rhymes that exist only to showcase the distinctive vocal techniques of Gordon, Ranaldo and guitarist Thurston Moore. The lyrics aren't really good, but they are captivating and fall perfectly in line with the album's musical aura.

It's the Sonic's structural arrangements and musical wizardry that sets "Goo" and all Sonic Youth efforts apart.

The music is evocative, compelling and hip. 21st Century coffee-house muzak that will someday make you long for the '90s like "Sgt. Pepper's" has our parents crying again for the '60s.

Trust me, buy "Goo," go home and set it on the mantle next to Fugazi's *Repeater* and Public Enemy's *Fear Of A Black Planet* as the first trophy's of an already impressive new decade of music.

Lange shines in video, 'Men Don't Leave'

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

Men Don't Leave
Rated PG-13
Release Date — today
"Men Don't Leave" is the second Jessica Lange film appearing on video this summer. Lange received a Best Actress nomination for "Music Box," released on video in June.

"Men Don't Leave" is a quality film that evokes warm-hearted tears and gentle laughs, and Lange's performance in this film may earn her another Oscar nomination.

Lange stars as a middle-class housewife and mother, Beth, whose husband, John, suddenly dies at work. John was the central family figure, provider and role-model.

Now, Beth must be the providing parent, get the family out of debt and learn to live without her husband.

The film doesn't have the "everything will be all right in two hours of film time" feeling. This family struggles, and strong performances by the entire cast make the audience struggle with them.

There is a subtle and reassuring theme that families working together will survive. Yet, this family doesn't always work together, and there are no guarantees of survival.

Newcomer Chris O'Donnell shines as the 17-year-old son, Chris, trying to reach manhood without his father. Charlie Korsmo ("Dick Tracy") is also effective as the younger brother who just wants a secure family again.

Lange is again superb, and I wonder if she will ever be mediocre in a film. Still, Lange is nearly upstaged by Joan Cusack, who plays a nauseatingly helpful nurse and Chris' older love interest.

The pacing of the film is a little

slow, and the ending doesn't sum up all the action and developments of the story. Still, "Men Don't Leave" is satisfying. **Grade: B**

Video Spotlight

Spike Lee's controversial 1989 film, "Do The Right Thing" is a challenge to watch.

The film chronicles the events leading to an outbreak of racial violence with unflinching honesty. The characters are real, portrayed as neither good nor bad.

Probably the best thing about "Do The Right Thing" is that it lays blame equally on everybody, and this is where the challenge comes in.

The film dares the audience to see the racial incident in neutral terms. Rather than blaming all the black characters or only the white characters, "Do The Right Thing" points the finger at all of them. If you are open-minded enough to see the other person's point of view, then this film is definitely worth watching.

"Do The Right Thing" was nominated for two academy awards last year for Best Original Screenplay (Spike Lee) and Best Supporting Actor (Danny Aiello). **Grade: A-**
• DON ATKINSON JR.

Internal Affairs
Rated R
Release Date — today

The filmmakers advertised, "Trust him... he's a cop."
Instead, trust me... it's a flop.

Garfield's summer comedy special starts today with headline attractions Shock, Richardson

Comedians Ron Shock and Gary Bun Richardson will appear at a special Thursday Night Live at Garfield's that begins today and continues on Friday and Saturday.

The comedy special is sponsored by the Brazos County Democratic Party and the Aggie Democrats with assistance from The Comedy Workshop and Garfields.

The comedy special is a rare opportunity for Bryan-College Station comedy fans to see two comics who are close to stardom.

Shock, a veteran headline comedian from Houston and one of the original members of the Texas Outlaw Comics, will perform at Friday and Saturday's shows.

One of the best story tellers around, Shock tells tales of his numerous experiences as a convict, a

business man, consultant and theology student.

Richardson, who will be a featured performer on Rick Dee's late-night TV show, "Into The Night," will perform with Shock and also appear tonight.

Using his popular "Good Ole Boy" approach to comedy, Richardson has won a large audience in the southwest.

Both Shock and Richardson are expected to perform a one hour routine during each show.

Thea Vidale, "Houston's Chocolate Kiss," was originally scheduled to perform with Shock, but has canceled because of a previous commitment.

Comedians Dan Merriman and Mike Sterner will perform with Richardson during this evening's

performance.

In case all of the national and regional comedians has you craving home town comedy, local comedian and A&M student Jason Porter will return to College Station for performances on Friday and Saturday. Porter is the opening performer for Thursday Night Live during the fall and spring semesters.

Tickets for tonight's show are \$7 in advance and \$8 at the door. Showtime is 9 p.m. Tickets are sold at Garfield's.

There will be two shows on Friday and Saturday night. Showtimes each night are at eight and 10. Tickets for each show are \$10. Persons must be 21 or older to attend. For more information about Thursday Night Live, call Garfield's at 693-1736.

• TODD STONE