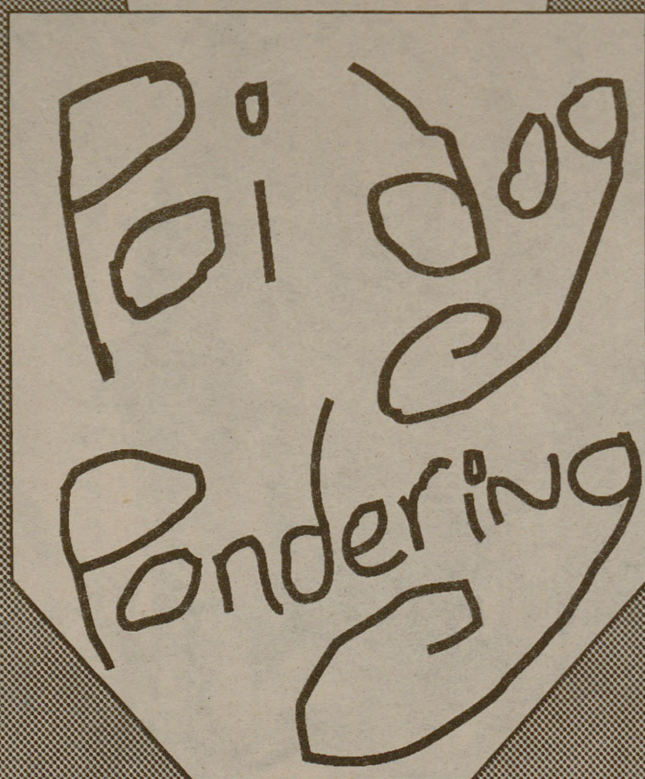




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Texas bands score with recordings

By Rob Newberry

The Road Kings
Runnin' Hot
Roots Records

Josh Alan
Famous and Poor
Four Dots Records

Formerly from College Station, now based in Houston, the Road Kings have developed a style riding the fence between blues-rock and country in that gray area of rockabilly. But this release is definitely not shady; for a new band's first recording, this is extremely solid.

Singer-guitarist Jesse Dayton fronts the band with bluesy guitar licks and twangy vocals. Filling out the hip-hop rhythms are Brian Lux on bass (usually upright) and Eric Tucker on drums. The threesome is as tight on tape as they are playing live.

The only disappointment with the release is the brevity. Six songs, including "Shotgun Wedding Blues," "Lust is a Terminal Thang" and my fave "Walk On By," make up the recording, but that's a very small sampling of what these guys have in their pockets. I wouldn't have objected to even having a cover song or two on the collection; the Road Kings can play the hell out of Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis tunes.

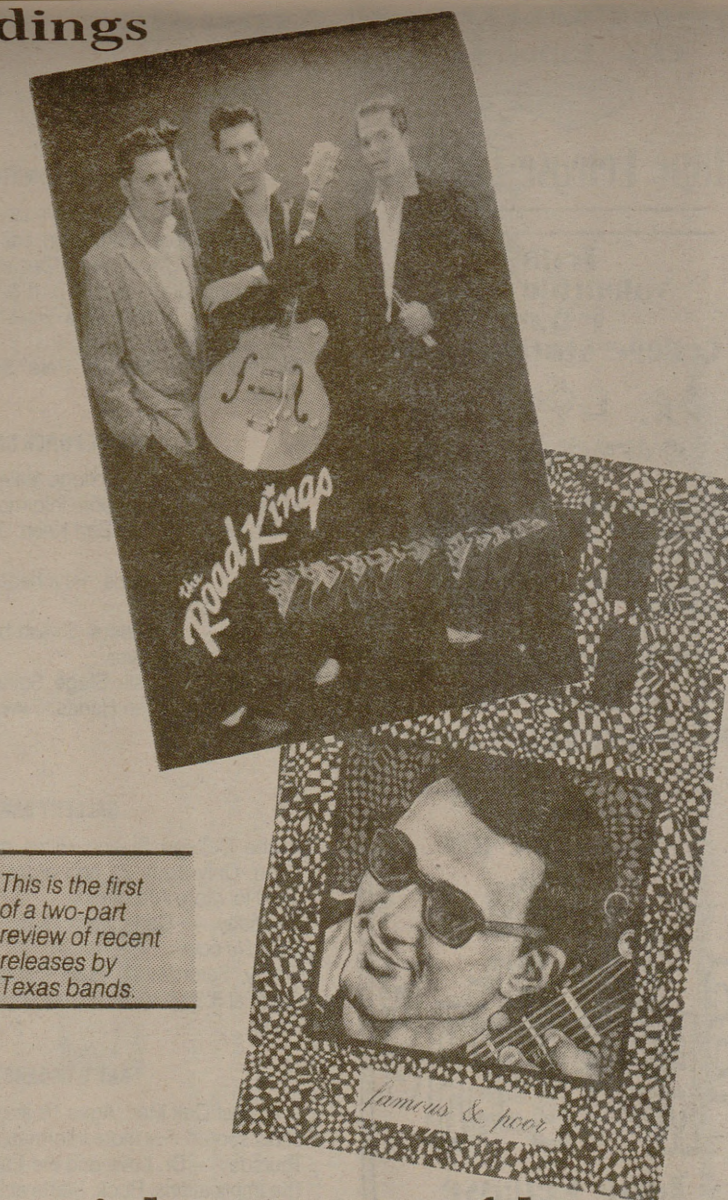
Look for the Road Kings playing around town for music that pleases both country and rock fans. And if you're as impressed as I was, grab a copy of the tape.

A regular on the Dallas Deep Ellum music scene, Josh Alan satisfies fans of his incredibly innovative guitar style with his first release. Alan has played at the Front Porch Cafe a couple of times, and is scheduled to play later in the semester for those of us who enjoy watching as well as listening to his style.

Alan's tape includes several instrumental songs that capitalize on his guitar work, and opens with "Josh's Breakdown," a jazzy, bluesy number he normally kicks off his live set with. The release also includes his cover of Hendrix's "Stone Free," a favorite with Alan's live crowds, recorded with a band on the tape.

Alan's lyrics are nearly as captivating as the guitar work itself. The title track and "Greyhound" both poke fun using Alan's subtle dark humor. Much of the other work is bluesy and raw, with some songs he recorded on a little Teac tape player in the kitchen of his Dallas home.

The guitar work on Alan's release is the most impressive I've ever seen, with quick changes between slide, jazz, blues and rhythm. The lyrics aren't shabby, either, so fans of this best-kept secret will want to pick up on *Famous and Poor*.



This is the first of a two-part review of recent releases by Texas bands.

LARD—alternative music with sense of humor

By Brian Paradis

LARD

The Last Temptation of Reid
Alternative Tentacles Records

LARD is about as close as industrial hard-core music has come to a supergroup. The band is headed up vocally by Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys, along with Alien Jourgensen (guitars, prog.) and Paul Barker (bass, prog.) both from Ministry, Revolting Cocks and Skinny Puppy. The cast is rounded out by Jeff Ward on drums, also from the Revolting Cocks. It's amazing that with this compilation of higher-profile industrial artists, LARD is still more or less relegated to the underground stereotype. They released their latest album *The Last Temptation of Reid* on Alternative Tentacles Records—Biafra's own label.

It is clear that *Reid*, the band's first full-length release, is more than just an outletting of their collective social conscience. This album is meant to serve as a kick in the butt (or a boot to the head—whatever it takes) to all the blissfully ignorant who close their eyes and ears to the realities of the world around them. As Biafra aptly put it in a song on the LARD's first album, "When people are asleep, we must all become alarm clocks."

Upon listening to the album, it is immediately apparent that Biafra intends

to wake up the sleeping with his shocking lyrics and shouting cartoon-like voice that DK fans are so familiar with. It is also clear, in noting the production, that Biafra's vocals are meant to dominate, while the instrumentation is deemphasized.

The opening track "Forkboy" denounces the evils of ultra-capitalism and those who choose to be the tools of it. It's a tune I strongly recommend to certain graft-ridden politicians and alumni that inevitably come to mind. The next song "Pineapple Face" is a satirical look at the U.S./Panama crisis as if through the eyes of that poorly complexioned dictator himself, Manuel Noriega. "When the mouse that roared / Bites the elephant that feeds / Ringmaster cracks / 20,000 whips." The needling of U.S. foreign policy continues. "Cartoon boogeymen to keep the people scared / I believe every word 'cos the truth is too weird / Who framed Roger Rabbit? / Who framed Khaddafi then blew up his kid?"

The most hilarious track on *Reid*, "Mate Spawn & Die," is up there with Frank Zappa's "Broken Hearts are for Assholes" as one of the great anti-romance anthems of all time. In a world of Hollywood-glam-bands, soap opera lust-affairs, and all other portrayals of love dripping with cheese, "Mate

Spawn & Die" lends a refreshing alternative. "In one corner of the ring / That cherished myth / Falling in love magically solves / Every problem you've ever had / In the other corner / Spoon-size shredded dreams."

"Drug Raid at 4 a.m." is a humorous, yet frighteningly realistic, staging of a typical DEA break-in style drug bust. After thoroughly raping the suspects' rights, the officer exits saying, "Sorry, wrong house."

"Bozo Skeleton" is the song in which Lard unleashes its ultimate theme: "If every fool wore a crown, we should all be king." This song, and the whole album, is filled with references to censorship (specifically the PMRC), a subject that Biafra feels strongly about. He even tours and lectures on the subject, which is exceptional considering the fact that LARD doesn't even tour as a band.

In covering "They're Coming to Take Me Away," Biafra parodies his own paranoia concerning his history of being targeted by censors. He specializes in poking fun at others, but is quick to note: "My license to make fun of everyone / Comes from knowing I'm the biggest joke of all."

If you've noticed that I haven't mentioned much about the music instrumentally, that's because there isn't

much to say. If you're a fan of Jourgensen and Barker through their work in Ministry, Skinny Puppy and Revolting Cocks, then you could find yourself dissatisfied with this album musically. LARD is clearly a vehicle for Biafra to showcase lyrically. While there is some interesting guitar work in "M S & D" and "I am Your Clock," a nearly 15 minute epic cursing society's stifling of creativity, it doesn't quite hold up to most of Jourgensen's prior work.

In comparison with their first release, the three-track *Power of LARD* EP, I found Jeff Ward's drumming lacking in imagination and diversity. But I must consider that when expected to keep up with the creativity of men with names like "Jello" and "Alien" not much can be expected from a "Jeff."

Nevertheless, what you have with LARD is some straight-forward punk/trash music simplistically backing the vocals of a man named after a popular brand of gelatin. And if you take the time to listen and to read the lyrics, what you have with *The Last Temptation of Reid* is an album with as much biting humor as Zappa's *Sheik Yerbouti*. If you're a fan of alternative music with a sense of humor, LARD is for you. If not... forget I mentioned it.