

Lifestyles

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The Battalion

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King Missile maintains indie humor on major label

By Kevin Robinson
The Battalion

King Missile
The Way to Salvation
Atlantic

Whoever would have thought it could happen? King Missile, loyalists of New York underground label, Shimmy-Disc and its dark master, Kramer, have been signed by Atlantic records for their new release, *The Way to Salvation*. Atlantic records!

We are talking about Led Zeppelin's old label, right? I guess it all goes to show that hard work and determination do pay off. . . or maybe it's just that the local Atlantic recruiter was smoking something funnier than his usual Marlboros.

The first question to enter my mind upon seeing the switch was whether King Missile had managed to maintain the degree of goofy humor that they had mastered on Shimmy-Disc.

The band hit college radio with a vengeance last year with the single, "Jesus is Cool", in which lead singer/songwriter John S. Hall informed the world (in his best stoned surfer voice) that if he had wanted to, Jesus could have danced better than Fred Astaire or baked the perfect German chocolate cake and that was sooo cool!

One look at the back cover of *Salvation* and noticing such tracks as "The Boy Who Ate Lasagna and Could Jump Over a Church" reassured me that Atlantic hadn't exactly been pushing these guys towards any mainstream success.

Now before I get ahead of myself, let me clue you in to my personal attitude towards most of these kinds of bands. I not only dislike most of these nerdy, punk, comedy acts, but the words loathe and despise often immediately leap to mind as well. The Dead Milkmen? Kill 'em again.

They Might Be Giants? I'd like to hang 'em buy their oh-so-cutesy big hats. And as for the founding father of all these geeks, Doctor Demento, the guy makes me want to retch.

But King Missile? I don't know. I realize it's only monologues over tired Zeppelinesque guitar riffs, but some of the lyrics make real sense in a bizarre kind of a way. On "Indians", Hall intones, "The Indians lived all over this land before we came and killed them/ That was very bad of us/ We thought we needed the land, but for the most part we just ruined it anyway".

At the end of this somewhat jumbled political spiel, Hall loses track of his subject and decides to relate how he killed a cockroach because of the simple fact that he



knew he could. Splat.

I know, not very gosh darn funny, but hey, its all in the telling. I also liked the hippy dippy ramblings of "My Heart is a Flower" in which Hall describes the metaphor in question as "budding, blooming, dripping dew/

Making a big hopeless mess/ Waiting for someone to come flying over and suck the pollen out of me/ Suck me dry/ Till I wilt/ Till next spring".

And if those two examples See KING MISSILE/Page 8

Toad the Wet Sprocket returns in 'Fear'



By Rob Neberry
The Battalion

Toad the Wet Sprocket
Fear
Sony Music

Finally. I've been waiting for over a year. Toad the Wet Sprocket's newest is finally on the shelves, and, although I was tired of waiting, the delay was worth it.

Toad caught my attention opening up for Michael Penn at the Tunnel Club in Austin a little over a year ago. They tore through selections from their first two releases, *Bread and Circus* and *Pale*, and won over the entire audience - it was the first time I've seen the crowd demand an encore from an opening band (Toad fulfilled their demand with a humorous but aggressive cover of Zep's "Stairway to Heaven").

The music of the first two albums left me with high expectations, and *Fear* meets everyone of them. Toad was

described to me as "R.E.M. on depressants" - *Fear* certainly features the disconnected lyrical style of R.E.M., and the sadness (mostly a result of singer Glen Phillips delivery) is still intact.

Fear opens with "Walk on the Ocean," a song featured on an earlier demo tape a few months ago. The song's honesty makes it good - as Phillips speaks flatly, "they knew we were lying, but smiled just the same," you can see a big part of the realistic, sad view most of Toad's music gives off.

"Hold Her Down," originally released as a B-side to the "Jam" single from *Pale*, also made it on to the new record, although changed a little from the original. The song chronicles a rape/murder: "And they don't know her but what the fuck, they got nothing else they can do." Phillips has always been rather disgusted with the way men treat women (witness "One Little Girl" from *Bread and Circus*), but

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