

Live FIREHOSE release offers interesting covers

By Kevin Robinson
The Battalion

FIREHOSE
"live totem pole e.p."
Columbia

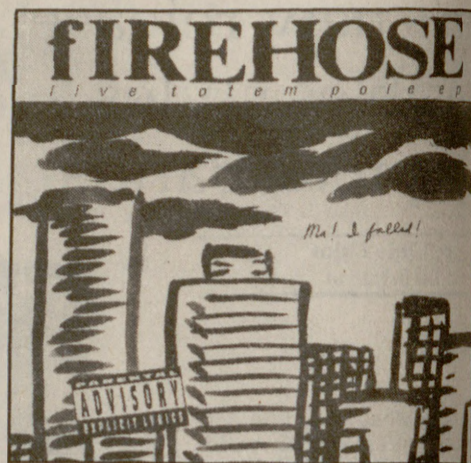
If FIREHOSE hasn't been declared one of the best damn groups in the world by now, it's about time people started waking up. The group formed out of the ashes of punk legends, the Minutemen, who joined Husker Du and the Meat Puppets in creating their own unique sound at a time when most of the punk scene was just going through the same tired motions. After the death of Minutemen vocalist, D.Boon, FIREHOSE took over where the former group left off, continuing to experiment, and producing some of the best music of the late eighties.

The new album from FIREHOSE, the "live totem pole e.p.", doesn't create the same type of musical nirvana that earlier releases did. It isn't supposed to, either. While records such as "if'n" were sonic odysseys full of obscure lyrics and FIREHOSE's trademark bass and guitar style, the new EP is more of a laid-back jam.

The album's been recorded live at the Palomino club, and other than two songs written by bassist Mike Watt, it's a collection of covers by groups the band happens to especially like. As mentioned before, this isn't FIREHOSE at their peak, but it's a fun 30 minutes or so and it's a cheap introduction to the band.

The album kicks off with "The Red and the Black" by Blue Oyster Cult. I've never been a big BOC fan myself, so I can't really comment on how good or faithful the cover version is. Suffice it to say that the band shows their age with this song and it's typical 70's progressive stuff, done in a way that seems less than reverent.

"Sophisticated Bitch" is a surprising track for two reasons. First, it's kind of funny that FIREHOSE would even attempt a Public Enemy song. Secondly, it's kind of funny that it comes off so well. That is, if you can imagine three thirty-something ex-punks doing Public Enemy with live instruments coming off well. Although it might turn away some hardcore P.E. fans, "Sophisticated" shows both how unpredictable and how much fun this group can be at a live



On their new live album, FIREHOSE covers songs from bands like Public Enemy and the Butthole Surfers.

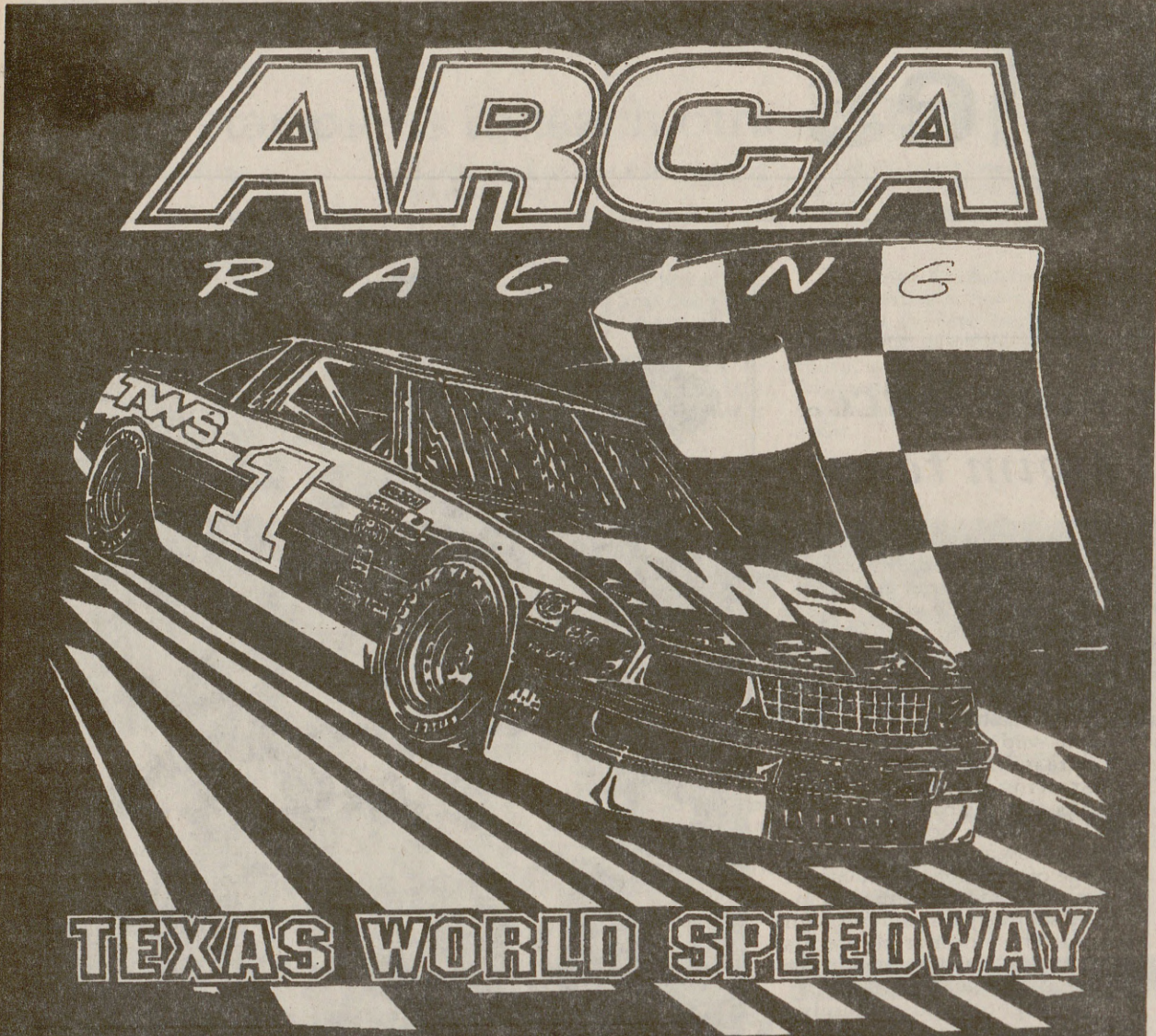
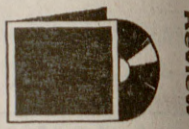
show. The Butthole Surfers get the cover treatment with "Revolution (Part Two)."

It's almost spooky how much FIREHOSE sounds like the Surfers this time around. Despite guitarist Crawford declaring, "I hope we don't fuck it up. Go by!" they get this track just right, giving the song extra strength that was missing from the original track.

The next track, "Slack Motherfucker," is by another wrongly neglected band, Superchunk. Though FIREHOSE doesn't do much more than a strong, faithful version of this song, at least it's included. Superchunk song is welcome anytime.

The two FIREHOSE originals show the strength that this band possesses. The tightness of the bass guitar, and drums are phenomenal. On the group studio albums, this tightness could be seen as the result of some sneaky producing techniques. Don't be fooled. The band is every bit as talented live as they are on the albums.

Music



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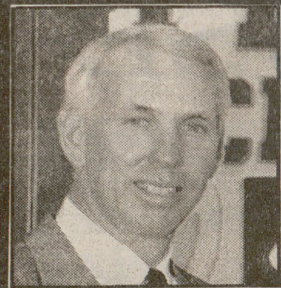
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'Beethoven' a bit 'ruff' on adults

By Timm Doolen
The Battalion

"Beethoven" Starring Charles Grodin and Bonnie Hunt
Directed by Brian Levant
Rated PG
Now playing at Post Oak 3

Who said they don't make good movies for kids anymore?

The most recent cute-animal movie, "Beethoven," proves that you can still take children to the movies without having to worry about reaching the two extremes of the young film-goers spectrum.

Most children movies are either sentimentally cute for kids, but a giant yawn for grownups, or grownups enjoy them somewhat while they fly over the kids' heads. "Beethoven" finds a refreshingly happy medium.

A puppy Saint Bernard accidentally stumbles into the Newton house and immediately captures the hearts of the entire family - except the uptight dad, George Newton, played by Charles Grodin.

He's balanced out by his wife, Bonnie Hunt, who along with her children convinces Dad to keep the puppy, who is given the name Beethoven after barking to the "Fifth Symphony."

Beethoven soon grows up to the full 150 pounds, and begins tearing up the house. The kids don't mind so much, but it drives Dad crazy.

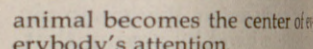
Unfortunately, an evil veterinarian wants the dog for some inhumane and surely fatal experiments, so he deceives the family and takes custody of the dog.

George has to show whether he really cares for this dog in order to save its life.

The meat of the drama is the overbearing and uptight George feeling threatened by an animal for supremacy in the family. After Beethoven enters the family's life, George is no longer top-dog.

For anyone who knows what it's like for an animal to come in and dominate an entire household, this movie is a humorous recount of what happens. I could really understand Grodin's character, who helplessly watches as an

Movie Review



animal becomes the center of everybody's attention.

If this film had been a musical composer, it more likely would have been M.C. Hammer than Beethoven. It's not complex, deep or brooding, but rather light, humorous and occasionally sentimental.

And it has definite drawbacks, especially to anyone over the age of 13 who might not think the "cute dog" scenes are especially cute. There are also some sickening stereotypes and cliches. For instance, after George socks the evil veterinarian, wife Alice says she never found him more attractive. Yuck.

The writers and director Brian Levant certainly take a some creative license, but that's usually considered OK in these kind of movies.

"Beethoven" will not make film history, and it most assuredly will not last too long at the theater. But if taken for what it tries to be - non-animated family entertainment that's a little cheesy (but not too bad) - it's a pretty good entry.

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