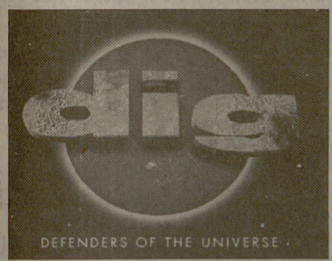


**MUSIC REVIEWS**



Dig  
*Defenders of the Universe*  
 Radioactive Records

Give this guy some Prozac. Dig's new release, *Defenders of the Universe*, is the male backlash album, and Alanis Morissette would be proud of her male counterparts. Vocalist/songwriter Scott Hackwith sings of internal battles with drugs and those who "just don't understand."

In "Whose Side Are You On?" Hackwith sings, "I'm a crack whore/I'm a lesser man." The lyrics are powerful, and, well, this is not the Bed of Roses soundtrack. Listeners are forced to dig into the sound and emotion projected by the five-piece California rock band because of the inescapable reality the lyrics project.

Despite an overdose on lyrical drug references, the album is quite a work of art. Instruments include a moog organ, banjo, baritone guitar, ukulele and the traditional bass and electric guitars, drums and percussion.

Many albums contain a "we really are sensitive guys" tune. *Defenders of the Universe* contains several. "Song for Liars" is an emotional tune that provokes a mixed reaction of anger and sadness. Hackwith sings, "You're hard to believe in/I can't do anything right/So I'll just save the fight/And forget you con-

ceived me/I'm sorry I'm not someone else/I'm sorry I can't make it right/I'm sorry I can't help myself."

An equally depressing song is "Stop Holding Your Breath," in which the singer advises listeners to stop waiting because "he's not coming back."

"Bashing In Your Head" takes a little annoyance to a level of violence. "I'm sorry/You're taking too long/Don't force me to bash in your head."

Listeners will find themselves asking, "Is this for real?" The truth is that it's so real, it's scary. Dig uncovers the issues everyone thinks about, but no one talks about.

The words to "e.l.o." aren't ones you'll soon forget. "You're so strung out/You say that this is the last time/You're in control/You'll stop tomorrow/I'm not the one/I'm not gonna be like you."

Is this *ABC Afterschool Special* material or what?

A double dose of depression, Dig is on the way to becoming just what Generation X has been asking for, a band that understands teenage confusion better than the LaToya Jackson hot line.

The music is versatile because it is depressing to the point of *Chicago's Greatest Hits*, but, at the same time, this stuff actually has a beat. Why didn't someone think of this before?

Dig is a band that has found a way to inspire thought about serious issues through its music, but some thoughts may be ones that listeners are uneasy about confronting.

*Defenders of the Universe* is an excellent album for confused teens because of the slap-in-the-face lyrics, but will also be enjoyed by music lovers for the talent and emotion displayed.

If you're looking for light rock love songs, keep digging.

Dig sings it like it is and sings it well. **B+**  
 - April Towery



Dig



Spoon

BY APRIL TOWERY  
 THE BATTALION

Spoon vocalist/guitarist Britt Daniel has been called passionate. He's been called sexy. He's also been called stupid.

Daniel, a 1993 UT graduate with a degree in radio, television and film, has been singing for Spoon since October 1993. The band signed with independent label Matador Records in New York in November 1995.

"Our manager said we were stupid for not signing with the other labels that were interested (Geffen and Warner Brothers)," Daniel said. "But Matador has an incredible track record."

"If we went with another label, we'd probably be getting more of a monetary push, maybe more radio coverage. We may go with that someday, but that's not what we wanted for right now."

Spoon has made changes since it originated in 1993. After losing guitarist Greg "Wendel Stivers" Wilson to another Austin band, Sincola, in 1994, Spoon became known as a power trio including Daniel, bassist/vocalist Andy Maguire and drummer Jim Eno. In January of this year, Maguire quit the band and was replaced by Scott Adair.

Daniel said that since the changes have been made, the band has "taken off."

"We toured to Europe with Guided By Voices and Archers of Loaf, and have made three videos," Daniel said.

The most recent video made was for "Not Turning Off," a song on Spoon's album *Telephono*, released in April of this year.

"It's going to be played on access shows, and will probably be played once on 120 Minutes on MTV," Daniel said.

Much has changed individually for Daniel since he started playing music in high school.

"I was in a crappy cover band in high school," he said. "Then I came to Austin and have been in different bands since 1988, not really going anywhere with the music."

Daniel said he has been told by his record company that he is a "passionate" singer.

"I like to convey a lot of emotion; that's the style I'm into," Daniel said.

"I think vocalization is using the rhythm of language. You can tell something about the singer by the inflection of words — I guess that's why people say I'm passionate."

Daniel said that although Spoon has had some enjoyable live shows, there have also had some bad experiences.

"We played a miserable show with Garbage in Detroit," Daniel said. "Most of the people there were high school or middle school kids that seemed very disinterested. Some of them sat with their backs to us while we played."

With influences such as the Pixies, the Beatles and Wire, Daniel said Spoon's focus is on good songwriting, not the onstage performance.

"We're not afraid of showing our influences," Daniel said.

"Our strong point is our songs. We're not going out there and taking off our shirts onstage. We're about writing good songs."

Daniel said playing live is fun, but it is secondary.

"What matters most is what's recorded," he said. "A band can suck live, but if they make good records, you can listen to them for years."

Daniel said thinking of song lyrics is never a problem.

"I'm not obsessive about it, but I carry a notebook with me, especially when we're out on the road," he said.

Daniel said although Spoon has not yet made a name for itself, people who have heard the music have said they like it.

"Matador has a very laid back philosophy," Daniel said.

"You're not dealing with something like Nada Surf — shove it down everyone's throats 'til they're sick of it. Working with Matador has been so different for us as far as distribution. When we were putting out our own CDs, it was just something to sell at local shows, kind of like our calling card."

Spoon is on tour now and will continue through January and "see what happens" after that. Daniel said he knows what isn't going to happen.

"Career-wise, I'd like to be able to do this," he said. "I'm not going to stop making music."

**Spoon dishes it out**

The rock band from Austin will be playing at Vertigo tonight.

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