

The Dead Milkmen Cometh

The world's wackiest band gets paranoid

By DAVE GRIMM

Daily Forty-Niner,
California State U., Long Beach

Soft, caressing melodic passages. Lifting harmonic accompaniment. Smooth, silky vocals delivering phrases of elegant poetic grace — Not!

These are the Dead Milkmen, and they don't play that. While they have put on record some of the most viciously satirical, bizarre and hilarious lyrics in rock and roll, their sound is relentlessly chaotic, unpredictable — and almost completely devoid of any of those elements. They typically throw together an eclectic array of styles and influences into a loud jumble that shows disdain for any sort of musical prettiness.

Until now, that is. Their sixth record, *Soul Rotation*, shows a touch more emphasis on the musical side of the equation. As evidenced by such revelations as the jazzy horn and sax solos on "How It's Gonna Be" and the catchy synthesizer riffs woven throughout the record's 13 tracks, it appears these hard-core college radio darlings got tuneful on us.

The band members (keyboardist and vocalist HP Hovercraft, guitarist and vocalist Butterfly Fairweather, bassist Dave Blood and drummer Dean Clean) concede that the music has evolved, but would not admit that it is the result of a natural maturing process. "More like ripening and rotting," Hovercraft said.

Blood was also having none of it. "Maturing" sounds like you should join the AARP or something," he said with a grimace.

To avoid any misunderstanding, *Soul Rotation* doesn't even remotely resemble an Air Supply record. The Milkmen can still sound like a rusty gate clanging shut. But they slapped a little grease on the hinges this time.

The result is a sound that is cleaner, more in tune and a little more listenable.

"We wanted to see how far away from our old sound we could get," Hovercraft said. "We got tired of people talking about the lyrics. We just took a lot of time to experiment with the sound this time."

But despite their best efforts, people will still talk about the lyrics. Returning to themes of paranoia and other-worldliness that have proven rich ground for the band in the past, the lyrics consistently show that the Milkmen haven't lost their sarcastic golden touch. To wit, check out this



COURTESY OF HOLLYWOOD RECORDS

The Dead Milkmen: Play their album, but don't take them home for dinner.

chunk of "The Conspiracy Song":

They own the state, they own the church, they fuck the winners of Star Search.

They own the Christians, they own the Jews, they own the Muslims, Mormons, too.

They put the hole in my sock, they put that snake in my mailbox.

"It's a very dark paranoia, but I think it's a justified paranoia," Hovercraft said of the lyrical themes, stressing that they aren't jokes but reflect actual Milkmen philosophy.

"The world is run by very few people," he said, implying that these people may not have our best interests at heart.

With a catalog full of song titles like "Right Wing Pigeons," "The Thing That Only Eats Hippies," "Takin' Retards to the Zoo" and "Anderson, Walkman, Buttholes and How," you wouldn't think this is a band that wants to be taken too

seriously. But Hovercraft professes to feeling that the band is just a little misunderstood.

"People laugh at some of our saddest songs. We write a sad song and people think it's really funny," he said.

The Milkmen, who will bop across America this summer after a five-week tour of Europe, say they do want to make you think. They just don't choose the path of overblown preachiness like, say, U2.

"If your parents lecture you, you don't learn anything," Hovercraft said. "Part of the problem in that the people lecturing you are usually such weenies."

"(Our approach) makes you think and decide for yourself," Clean said.

You think your life is scary? Try Nick Cave's

By LAURA SCHMIDT

Columbia Daily Spectator, Columbia U.

Nick Cave is frightened — frightened that *Henry's Dream*, his seventh album, contains the last songs in him.

"When I decide it's time to make a new record," he says, "I am in a state of panic until it's finished.... *Henry's Dream* was a nightmare to make, a nightmare to write. I would literally pass the room with the piano in it and look at it out of the corner of my eye. It would be sitting there, waiting for me to... waste another five hours banging on something that never came to anything."

To those who have known Cave since he was the frontman for The Birthday Party in the early '80s, such an image may seem strange. He has always been portrayed by the press as a scary guy, whether it was as The Party's goth-idol-singer, or as a rock star turned writer who chose a criminally insane boy as the lead character of his first novel, "And The Ass Saw The Angel." Now Cave lives in Brazil, refuses to watch MTV, and insists that there is more to his work than his seeming obsession with scary topics.

"I think that people tend towards certain elements in my music (more) than other ones. They generally completely ignore the humor in my work, and they dwell on the 'darker side' for want of a better word. I mean, there is that side to my character. I know it very well. But there is also a very healthy sense of humor to my work... or an unhealthy sense."

Henry's Dream walks both sides of the issue, containing songs which are intelligent, provoking, unconventional, frightening as hell, and hilarious. The album has the romantic flare of his last release, *The Good Son*, but with a rawer feel and rockier tone.

But music is not the only creative outlet for the Australian-born Renaissance man. "And The Ass Saw The Angel," which came out in 1988, received favorable reviews in both the music and literary worlds. But it wasn't Cave's first journey into writing. After The Birthday Party broke up, Cave authored "Ghosts of the Civil Dead," a film script about killer and prison theorist Jack Henry Abbott, author of "In the Belly of the Beast." Cave has also appeared in "Wings of Desire" and "Johnny Suede." Wim Wenders even asked him to pen the title song to his latest film, "Until the End of The World."

With all this going for him, it doesn't seem possible that Cave would ever dry up. For this musician and writer, however, the worries just get bigger. "The larger you build your backlog of material, the more you have to live up to," he says with a solemn expression.

Life's not completely awful, though, and Cave realizes that it's really a question of perspective: "Most of it is just a matter of sitting down and doing it and not worrying about it so much. I write my best stuff when I can get myself into thinking, 'Fuck it, it doesn't really matter that much. Go in, do it, and enjoy it.'"



COURTESY OF ELEKTRA ENTERTAINMENT

Poet of a generation — or just deeply disturbed?