
The New Spirit Of The Bowery – The Martinets

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*It's a big decision
To start a new religion*

EAMONN BOWLES is reflecting on the warm reviews given to the debut CD by his band the Martinets. "It's mostly from these kinds of "insider" rock publications", he says, "But they've been uniformly pretty terrific. That's been kind of nice, because we've just thrown it out there and we don't really know what's happening. We're sort of unfashionable as far as what current music trends are, so it's just nice that somebody likes it."

It's an easy CD to like. Bulging with slashing Johnny Thunders styled riffage and songs with intelligent and witty lyrics about life in general, *Love! Hate!* is a set of 13 songs that rocks the body and stirs the brain. Some might lump it in with any of dozens of other trashy punk bands who play three loud chords and sing about drinking beer, but there's a lot more going on here. From the opening smash "I Don't Follow" to the closing romp "Next Time", this CD is loaded.

"We're all really influenced by the New York Dolls and Heartbreakers and all that New York City stuff around that time is where we all come from."

"I was in a lot of punk bands in New York. The first band was the **FABIANS**...we played Max's Kansas City and CBGBs in the early 80s. And **ROGER MURDOCH** then played with me in a few bands. **DAVE RICK** I knew...he's sort of a guitar legend with **BONGWATER** and **BALL** and played with early **YO LA TENGO** and **PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH**. He was like a Shimmydisc house guitarist. He played in **KING MISSILE**, too, for the last three or four records. Roger also played with King Missile on drums."

"So I knew Dave from way back when, but I hadn't really played with him...just jamming a couple of times. And **DANIEL REY** they knew because he produced the King Missile record that they both played on and Roger was in a band with Daniel."

Rey also produced, co-wrote songs for and played with later period **RAMONES**, and he ran the knobs for the recording of the Martinets CD, which was released on Scooch Pooch last winter. All this experience means that while they have a more straight on punk rock approach than most of their predecessor bands, the extra level of ability is obvious in the arrangements, production, and most of all the general *swing* that *Love! Hate!* brings to the table.

*Eggs on the side
Poached please not fried*

But perhaps the tastiest item on the menu is the lyrics; words that are well thought out with small and memorable phrases that leap out and lodge themselves in your brain.

"Well rock lyrics aren't too good in general", laughs Eamonn. "I don't think too much about it...it flows and I try to make sure that it makes sense in some sort of person's logic. Just try to find a sort of persona in a song and just make sure that it doesn't sound like the person doing that would be full of shit. I dunno, lyrics come to me in the shower. I try not to overwrite"

*I don't know if it's a good thing
To hear the noisy bells of freedom ring*

He goes on to give an example of where ideas come from. "'Treasures" was inspired by my daughter, who was around 2-1/2 at the time and we have her on videotape pretending to play a guitar. She's looking at this little accumulation of jewelry that she had and doing a stream of consciousness thing just looking around her and singing about everything she saw, and she sang "Now I see the treasures! Now I see the treasures!". And I was like "Hey, that's a great hook!". So she's not credited on there, but that was the inspiration for that."

The Martinets have figured out the trick of making the hard songs hit harder by putting in some slower moments to break things up, like "A Moment Of Silence, Please" or "Imperfect Goddess", which echoes Mott The Hoople with its "Roll away the stone" theme. Was Eamonn aware of that song?

"Yeah", he laughs sheepishly, "And there's also a Leon Russell song from way back then that I actually used to like. There's probably three or four songs with that in there. As I was writing it I was thinking "oh, well, this has been done before, but, ah, fuck it." The genesis for that song was a line from a book that says "love is a religion with an imperfect god", which I always thought was a great line".

*Somebody's ringing at my buzzer
You coming back from one of your flings
I knew you'd come back to your senses
You said you're just back for your things*

Those lines come from the brilliant "Next Time", the rock-em-sock-em closer written nearly twenty years ago. "That was from my first band the Fabians", says Eamonn, "and it's not too different than when we played it then. Roger actually played on that song way back when, when we were in the band together. Roger suggested we do it and we tried it at practice and it came out great. That one and "Can't Pretend"...that was an old Fabian song as well."

"Most of the songs were written in the past few years. About half were written before the Martinets came about. I was just doing portastudio stuff. It's been so nice, because I'm a very primitive musician, and while the portastudio is fun and I really like it, to have the songs fleshed out by Roger and Dave and Daniel...the first time we played them I felt like: "Yeah! Alright, that's what they sound like! Alright!" I have to say that they are some of my favorite musicians. Roger is an amazing drummer. To paraphrase Keith Moon, he's the best fucking Roger Murdock drummer in the world. Dave moves mountains and Daniel is just incredible."

The cover of *Love! Hate!* has a classic-looking photo of what appears to be the ultimate in relationship breakdown; a woman winding up to belt a cowering male at her side. "Well actually, that was sort of improvised", laughs Eamonn. "That was me and my wife. She's

whacking me...I was trying to find archival footage of much the same thing and I couldn't, so we just staged it. My brother-in-law was there with his camera, so I said "Hey, take a picture quick. Jackie, hit me!" It didn't take her much motivation to do that."

The very week we spoke the Martinets had just completed recording the basic tracks for 19 new songs in a one day marathon session that should ultimately lead to a new CD in the not too distant future. But the band is just a side effort for the group...they all have significant careers going on. Eamonn himself is a senior executive for an independent film company called *Shooting Gallery*...an unlikely cover for a punk rock singer!

"We've started getting more and more gigs and we're playing out quite a bit now. We just opened for Luna at the Knitting Factory. That was a huge sold out gig, and we're like "Hey, we're a rock band! Woah!" We've had four gigs in four weeks...a fairly steady stream. It's kind of nice in this band, because we just don't do anything we don't want to do. We're not like careerists or trying to get that hit single. There's something nice about that. We just don't care. We go: "That's fun to do, let's do that". There's a lot of freedom in that."

Next time there just won't be a next time...