

ATTACK OF THE
PLANET SMASHERS!
 SKA MONTREAL PO



W/ BLACKOUTS
 & THE MOTIVES

SAT, FEB. 9TH

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Interview with Planet Smashers take one. Introduce yourselves please.

M: I'm Matt from the Smashers

D: Dave from the Smashers

You started in 1993, how have you noticed audience changes? Well yeah obviously, but its been 10 years now.

M: Yeah it's been a lot of changes. When we started out there weren't a lot of bands that were known up in Montreal where we were playing that were doing ska. You know Moon Ska Records was still pretty tiny up in Canada.

Skaface?

M: Yeah they were, King Apparatus was just finishing, Me Mom & Morgentaler was just breaking up, Arsenal was just fartin' around... They never really did anything. **They still are right?**

M: (sounding disappointed) Yeah, they could've been great but they just never decided to play anywhere else other than Toronto, so whatever... But you know there wasn't really a lot going on. We knew of the Scofflaws.

Fritz, the gig's promoter enters: Okay I found out what the rule was...

M: The beer rule.

FS: ...You can't bring alcohol into a bar, they never told me that

M: They confiscated your beer?

FS: So I go, Can I have it so I can get it the fuck out of here? "Oh it's gone", and then he says "You can have it at the end of the night."

M: Oh our beer's gone... and this has been seven years of this problem! Every night these coolers just disappear!

FS: Well I just want to know the fuckin' rules that's all (laughs)

M: That would be nice

FS: Tell me the fucking rules! (a Blackout enters) Hey if you're looking for beer, there ain't none, they took it away from us, we're not supposed to bring it...

M: Awww, anyway

You're not allowed!

M: Yeah so there's been a lot of changes you know when ska blew up down in the states, it didn't blow up as much as it did in Canada, but it still got pretty big and the press jumped on it and yunno after that went away it was all back to normal and nice again.

(points to HP7) Hey look a review... aww

What's ska like in Montreal now? I heard Toronto had 700 people at this year's Ska Ska Oi benefit in the beginning of January?

M: Yeah that was the A.R.A.'s [Anti-Racist Action] benefit show

Did you play it?

M: No no, it was General Rudie that played that show this year, it was very cool. We did it 2 years ago and it was great, but ska in Montreal is way bigger than that. **You got a couple bands - Kingpins, General Rudie. It's a bigger city right?**

M: Actually its smaller than Toronto.

Ok.

M: That's okay it's alright. At home it's huge - I mean every music scene there is gigantic. In Montreal it's especially gigantic because kids just come out and they support it. Punkrock is huge there, ska music; when we play we get over 2,000 people.

FS: (aside to someone) If you're looking for beer they confiscated it.

Dobbs: How come?

FS: They never told us. I guess you're not allowed to bring beer in here or any alcohol.

M: And same with a lot of the other bands you know get great turnouts there. It's very cool.

How has Stomp been doing lately? I heard from the UK that you guys moved again?

M: Yeah that's weird. You heard it from *Do The Dog* magazine or whatever? That's a great fanzine. We moved our store down onto, well downtown. Basically now it sits in a real store. Like it's really cool it's doing really well and the label is now at the old store so we're all together again - because we were spread all over the place and it was stupid, but now its really good. And the label's goin' good, we've got a few new releases and we're looking at a couple more new ska records for next year, and for this year too. Probably from the Stomp All Stars, a new band that's been playing and then a couple other bands we're just checking out. King Conqueror from Halifax, stuff like that. It's pretty cool.

You've recently done a few Warped Tours. How did you get hooked up? Future plans?

M: It's weird. Okay like in 1999 we got on one date and then in 2000 we got on 2 dates, and last year we got on 6 dates, and this year we just got our dates in... Normally we don't know until May, but this year they sent them like what February, right Dave? We got 17 dates on Warped Tour 2002 and we're on it like from Tampa all the way up to Montreal, and Detroit and then we're also doing, well we might be doing Calgary/Vancouver we don't know. We have been asked to do them but we don't know. We've been approached.

D: Did Virginia and the Carolinas ask us?

M: Yeah its all over the place, so its really cool for us. It's just a lot of hard work and when we did our few dates last year [2001], we made friends with the right people. We didn't suck.

D: We didn't drive a bus through a fence or beat any other band up with a baseball bat. Do you know about that story?

No, do tell...

M: Aaaa D-12, beat up Rasheem or Rasheed, Esham, the other rap band ...or hip-hop, sorry.

D: There was a fight with baseball bats between Eminem's band and the other hip hop band Natas.

M: Two opposing hip hop bands fought, so they got kicked off the tour.

D: And after they beat 'em up, they stole their tour bus and drove it into a fence!

What city was this in?

M: It was 3 dates before we came on so it must've been in North Carolina? But even when we came on Alien Ant Farm was getting kicked off because they were a bunch of assholes apparently. We didn't know about it, they seemed nice to us.

D: They pulled the rockstar card and they wanted to be right next to.. They wanted to be on the main stage headlining band.

M: And then they suck

That must've been right about when their video broke. Smooth Criminal?

M: They were like, "We sold 500,000 copies!"

D: (shouting) It was just a COVER!! They don't get it, it was a Michael Jackson song! To put a bunch of jerks on the Warped Tour for that, naaaa.

M: Also you can't do that at Warped Tour; it's not that type of event where you can say look at our sales and put us on. Say exactly, why the fuck are we on it?

D: We can't say look at our sales and put us on so they put us on... So they put us on because they *don't* look at our sales (laughs) I like that way.

M: No honestly, it's cool and that's why we're goin' to California right now. Another reason we got on Warped Tour is because we're goin' to California and basically we're just showing these guys that yes we are in fact a real band, and we don't need a big boat-load of money to make us famous.

Yeah too I like your sound, because it's not super old, it's now - easily accessible pop music. Does that make any sense?

M: It's somewhere in there, I don't know what it is, you know. It's obvious that we're not rippin' off all the old Jamaican stuff

D: We're goin' our own way, man.

Yeah! not like the other groups man!

M: If Duran Duran... played ska, we'd call it Old-Finger

You know that old 7800 video game called 'Planet Smashers'?

D: Yes, Atari

Is it inspiration where you took the name?

D: No

M: It should have been but it wasn't.

D: But it wasn't, we completely thought it up ad lib...

M: All on our own man

D: It was absolute brilliance! (laughs)

The cover on your debut CD is eerily similar to King Apparatus' sleeve art, was that intentional? A homage maybe?

M: Actually that King Apparatus... reissue of their first record was after our record came out. The first version

of them, or that particular record is like an overhead shot of people wearing baseball caps

So the new Asian Man pressing, the reissue one with red ballcaps came first. Always ahead of their time - very Fred Durst 'Nookie'-esque

M: Yeah, the original Asian Man is the original artwork restored and what happened with that was they got signed to Cargo, and Cargo cheapskated out and just made up this ugly thing. But actually we were ripping off DEVO on that one. (to Dave) Wasn't it Devo live?

D: uhhhh

M: Yeah, Devo live, mongoloid years.

Seemed like it could have been done before. Porkers did that mongoloid

M: Specifically, we were ripping off Devo live - we were ripping people off, no doubt about it.

D: The design is yes. If you're into the design thing it's old hat. "Let's put our name up, and then put our faces behind it, har har"

M: Yeah

Same thing with Life of the Party / J.F.K. and The Conspirators' Mayor of Ganja City?

M: Exactly. We went for the leg shot. We knew there was the leg shot already, but they didn't exploit it as much as we did.

D: But it's certainly not the first. There's all the old guys from the sixties. Studio One has lots of those kind of shots too, so it's like everyone borrows from everyone else.

Hot shots of reggae

M: But most importantly, none of them were curling! See, so I mean yunno, come on.

And none were Genevieve's legs.

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Who writes songs in the Planet Smashers? Is it collaborative effort or does one guy do most of it?

M: We actually hire songwriters to pen our songs and we pay them a lot of money. *(chuckles)* It's all Tim Doyle! Tim Doyle writes all of them.

D: Who needs to write songs when you just rip off other people?

M: Yeah man, it's all we do. No, but seriously we're all involved at some level, it's really all over the place.

We talked about King Apparatus, how was working in studio with Chris Murray? He produced on your Attack of... ('97) and then helped out for Life of the Party ('99) as well.

M: Actually it's kinda weird. He's super-talented as a musician and as a guy, as producer is really talented, but um sometimes you know our ideas clash, and it's sort of a weird situation where someone's sort of taking control of your music and you don't really know what he's doing... But it ends up working out. He's a wise guy and he's a great guy really good. A talented, stubborn musician.

D: Yeah, we plan to meet up with when we head out to California

M: Yeah, we're gonna beat his ass! No I'm kidding... He's really talented. He's good.

What about Steve Drake as producer? He did the Barenaked Ladies' first demo tape.

M: Next question...

D: Next question! Skip that question, if you can't say anything good. We said something good about Chris Murray! What do you want?!

M: Whaddyou want from us man?

The Chris Murray question was unplanned

M: With Drake we tried something new and it just didn't really work. It was a very frustrating experience.

What made you want to play live music? Or ska in particular?

M: We wanted to party. Basically it was fun.

D: We started when grunge was like at the peak, and we were just kind of like, we can't do that, that sucks!

M: And it's still at the peak! Haha

D: And it hasn't... We figured it would go away sooner or later

(Matt imitates awful grunge singing)

Any Seattle dates played when you go over there, near Vancouver?

M: *(swallowing beverage)* Mmmm we did once, not on this tour. We played Seattle a long time ago... in '97?

D: When grunge was huge!

M: At a laundry mart

D: Yeah, at the "Sit and Spin",

M: Yup, and we sat and we span

D: Hehehe you can play a concert and do your laundry at the same time!

M: It was good for us actually

D: *(looking at questions)* Do you mind if I read this behind? So I know what he's gonna ask you, Matt?

No not at all, ok ask

D: Oh no, you do the interview

When not working on band or label what do you do in your spare time? Is it all hockey, skateboards, record collecting?

M: That's pretty much it. Yeah

(in unison) Shoveling snow!

D: ...drinkin' da beer

You mention American brew in your songs.

What does Rolling Rock taste like? Rice?

M: It actually tastes like nothing. Heh, it tastes like a good wheat beer, but more importantly, you drink a whole six pack and you don't feel a thing.

D: Well there's that slight kind of appeal of it in the green bottle, the whole idea that...

M: It seems like you're drinking this really upscale beer and instead it's just like pisswater. But it's great and I love it – it's the best beer ever! Hooray!

He says that Jack the bear is a Canadian phrase, is this true?

M: Um actually...

Danny Devito's movie is on HBO this week

M: It's true. It's... actually the phrase is a little different, its not actually Jack the bear, it's Jack *the beer*.

Especially here at Milestones, so. Ha ha no, I've never heard of that.

D: Besides, what does Danny Devito know about Canada anyway?

M: Yeah, Danny Devito's a short little idiot!

D: Yeah, Taxi! New York, Taxi!

Are people in Montreal / Toronto more fashion conscious? When I go to visit, everyone's dressed really sharp.

M: Toronto is NOT fuckin' fashion conscious!

More than this country then. We're sloppy.

M: Yeah, maybe but [in Toronto] they know how to dress as a banker.

D: The goal of Toronto is to have the outfit the other guy has. In Montreal, the goal is to be the complete opposite of everyone else.

M: Yeah, and to look fucki--- The chicks in Montreal dress so well it's amazing. It's great, they got this European desire to be I dunno lookin' hot, and it's great. We definitely appreciate that.

D: French = fashion, French = fashion

M: *(in French woman's voice)* "I would like a croissant with my cafe, thank you." hehe

It's close to being a European city.

The bilingualism where half speak French?

M: Yep, that pretty much does it. It's actually the heart of fashion for all of Canada and pretty much of North America, so...

D: Yeah it is

M: Apart from New York City

D: But a lot of people in New York draw from this little cult from Montreal though

M: It's really bizarre in Montreal – you go to a mall and there's like fashion shows going on all over the place. It's like "Aw christ, not another fashion show! Get the fuck out of my way..."

D: Well, I'll just sit there and watch for only 2 minutes..

M: *(French woman's voice again)* "All I want to do is sit here and eat my poutine." Haha.

I first saw you at Mercury in Buffalo, maybe in fall '97, and since WNY has seen France's own Skarface here in the U.S. many thanks to your own Stomp label. Is it a pain in the ass to cross border in 2002?

M: Pain in the ass. Literally. Owch! get that probe out of my ass Dave! Anyway no, now we actually do things legally so uh...

D: The other night, instead of searching our vehicle for everything like top to bottom at the border, the guards just stood there with their coffees and talked about, er reminisced about other bands... It was weird they were trying to make us slip and say things like "We do a lot of drugs". They were standing there saying "Oh yeah that band does a lot of drugs 'ay?" That band, this band, "what about you guys?" "No sir."

But they let us in, it was alright and here we are.

Is Ian Hodgkinson's Canadian fanzine of Ska Goes North! still publishing?

M: Definitely no.

D: I don't know, he still might be pursuing the dream...

M: He's actually a pretty nice guy and buys us beer. *(whispering)* Thanks for the beer!

How important are 'zines? Should we forget about them and postal mail because the big bad internet's around or what?

M: Okay, I hate internet zines. I fucking hate – more than anything a web zine.

D: I don't like to read a television. I don't like to.

M: "I have a web zine, can you send me 20 CDs?"

Fuck you!

D: I can't concentrate on a T.V. screen, and there will always be that pile of people who can't do that.

M: Zines rock! Reading is my material!

Balancing the pros & cons, it's tough work to get one of those out

M: Yeah it has to be, it's a pain in the ass to put one out – but it's real!

D: *(flipping through)* We could use a few more hotties in here, but otherwise. A few more pictures of women. You could degrade women a little more...

M: DAVE!

D: You know for sorta that *Maxim* kind of deal.

You could make it look like *Maxim*!

M: Don't get me wrong, the internet's great for finding stuff out, but for actually printing something up of quality which actually means something, internet fanzines is a waste of time. Who gives a crap, any asshole can do it!

D: The web is good to keep up with the pictures, with the tour dates and videos, and maybe MP3s. Those are things that you can sort of deal with. But when you have a wack of different color letters, and they're all of different shapes and sizes, you just think to yourself – words, words, scrolling down words...

M: It's great for the mailorder too. The internet's great for mailorder. **(Online at stomprecords.com)**

D: Yeah there's conveniences to it, but one of them is definitely not sitting there and reading for long periods of time.

M: Fanzines are meant for reading in bus stops and like weird shit like that; for driving out to California,

which is what we're doin'. And they're great, and the more people that can do 'em the better... Like I, our label will support this.

D: Do you? – ok you should write to the label and get free CDs sent to you. I don't know if you do already, but you should because this is unlike everything else. And you need more covers like this one! [#3]

M: Or that one [#5]. Yeah he's on the right track

D: You got it.

Union 2112. Rush fans or something?

M: Dave loves Rush!

Do you have all the albums?

D: I used to play in a Rush cover band a long time ago

M: He also played in a Haywire cover band

D: Yeah, I did everything man... I was a real mooner for a while there

Any idea what you'd be doing if not touring in a ska band?

M: He'd be listening to Rush

D: Yep, probably listening to Rush

What was the name? A Farewell to Kings? Was it a Rush-themed name?

D: Which one?

M: It was called "Closer to the Heart."

No no, "My heart is closer than you!" *(laughs)*

That's about it. Anything else you want to talk about?

M: Do you make fun of Canadian people?

(Kurt Ruchiensky, the trombonist enters, warming up)

D: Ask the trombone player...

M: Thanks man!

THE END.

Yep this interview is wicked old. Look for Planet Smashers' tracks on both Stomp's All-Skanadian Club #4 and the Still Standing compilation from Megalith / JumpUp. Plus the explosive brand new CD, "Mighty" out in June.

THE PLANET SMASHERS • STOMP RECORDS UNION
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