

GENERAL

rudie

Started in February '97, General Rudie have since had the opportunity to play with some of the biggest names in ska today. These bands include the New York Ska-Jazz Ensemble, The Articles, Allstonians, Kingpins and the Planet Smashers. They've also participated in an Inspector 7 tour which brought them to New Jersey late last September. The band has also had the honour of playing with the legendary Skatalites, the originators of ska music. In the past year the band has firmly established itself in the Toronto area and played the A.R.A. (Anti-Racist Action) yearly benefit at the Big Bop in January. Last summer also saw the band play at the Ottawa Tulip Festival as well as the Toronto International Jazz Festival. The following interview took place on a chilly Sunday afternoon in April 2001.

Phil Dixon - alto / tenor sax / vocals
Nicky Popovic - Trombone
Marc Thompson - Keyboards
Stefan Popowycz - Bass
Mike Gasseldorfer - Drums

Did you like coming down here? I guess you made it across the border without incident

Phil: Yeah, cool

Stefan: No problems

Work permits and all...

Nicky: Our 2001 American tour!

Phil: Ha, ha. No more work permits questions please

You're from Montreal, could you give readers a brief history. This is almost the first I'd ever seen of your band... Once I read about you in *Suits & Spikes*, (Toronto fanzine) and since there have been a couple personnel changes. But that's pretty much all I know.

Phil: Well we started about 5 years

ago, I think its 95-96, all different guys except me and Stefan, he was in the back, finally got in a couple years ago an moved more and more towards the traditional ska that we're doing now. That's about it.

Explain what your city is like ska wise? I heard the Kingpins are opening some doors, but have switched over to being a jazz band. So is this true?

Phil: Ah they never were jazz, they're like pop now, gone like...

But they're still together?

Phil: Yeah they're still going. They lost Paddy which is sort a shame, the lead singer, and changed up... but um the Montreal scene is pretty strong with Subb, 'Smashers...

Stefan: Smashers, Kingpins are still going strong, then there's us, wait, our Tavernists? (*inaudible*) That's a nice new band. It's doing pretty good up there.

Montreal is a very Euro city; known well with its huge int'l

renowned jazz festival. More than compared to Toronto. Here, we think Canada and it's usually Toronto and fast ferries to get us there, or a casino in Niagara Falls.

Stefan: Yes well it is the homebase of Stomp Records. Stomp Records is based in Montreal, so its Moon Ska Canada, 'cause you know Moon Ska USA went bankrupt or belly up or something. Ska Canada is just a separate branch which is still functioning and yeah, it pretty much is the center of ska in Canada **Ska goes north!**

Phil: And we're happy to announce we're gonna be releasing our new album on Stomp Records!

It retains the name Stomp even though its the Union Label Group 2112 right? They've branched out some more.

Phil: It's different though, they're starting to.. no they like.. its not the Union 2112. They whaddy-ou call it, they took all the bands and categorised them so each person fits their slot, so like ska will go to Stomp. Then grunge or garage'll go you know to Tyrant, and Union 2112 is like mod rock, such as The Datsuns

Stefan: All that stuff

Phil: and so its all the same music, they just...

Organized it a bit better

Phil: Yeah

You said you have a new CD coming out on that label? When can we anticipate that

one? Times are lean.

Phil: uh aaaa that should be in early June (2001)

Nicky: No August, August

Phil: August!? Shut up! we're recording in May and it should be out by June and so we'll be touring all this summer. Hopefully we'll be back in Rochester for the fall

What's the dual language like in Quebec? Your home has serious regulations pertaining to signage, to keep things bilingual. I work for a paper carton company which sells in French Canada; we have to fit dual translation on them...

ALL: Yeah!

A real pain. But is that even a concern anymore? Or rather something only foreigners ask you about?

Nicky: We're all pretty much bilingual man

Phil: Yeah sure, straightedge Nicky!

Stefan: Straightedge Nicky is just a straight edge Nicholas with those big black "x"s on his hands... (*more inaudible teasing*)

Nicky: and I used to play your saxophone? or trumpet

Phil: Yeah, we were missing our trumpet player today.

Do you acquire it natural just from that environment? Is the fluency something you just pick up by immersion?

Nicky: Yeah, well I mean I'm half... my mom's French speaking, his mom's french speaking...

Phil: My mom's...

Stefan: So its not like this huge





Generally speaking – Phil Dixon

divide, as is portrayed in the American press. Its just bilingualism, so we grew up learning how to speak in both at the same time. School is usually divided half English/ half French, so you learn from people of both languages. Now I mean we as a band have some French songs obviously that you may have just heard us do... Nicky: We're on the all-French ska compilation series in Quebec Phil: Oh yea yea that's true! It's called *Two Tongue*. There's a volume 1 and 2, two has just came out. It features all the French Canadian ska bands, even some bands from France. There will be a #3 of that series possibly as well. Stefan: Lots of nice stuff! (to Phil) Do we have a link on the webpage to the comp?

Phil: Naaaaa, but you should check out our web page anyway,

its at skapages.com/generalrudie
How important are checkers to you as a ska band? This is meant as a serious question. Philosophical identity? You like to look sharp and present well onstage, but is that obscenely cliched at all? Not some NASCAR stripe. Or is it still some inherent part of 'being' ska? Suits, rudies and / or checkerboards. We can get into the design too.

Phil: I mean its getting a bit out of hand... I know what you say. It is important for people to know what it stands for the roots, the racial unity and all that...

Lingual diversity

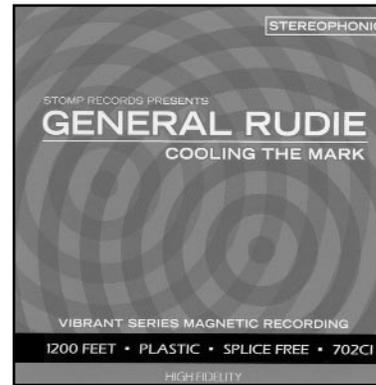
so if that leads the music, then just like anything else...

Stefan was discussing the relevance of good design to CD. Any CD. If you put out smooth music, you keep consistent and have a professional look which presents itself well. Though in the 1980s, ska used to be more image conscious (mod style and all that); It's not *all* about aesthetic. Fans will either know your name or seek the sound.

Stefan: For our disc that will be coming out there's a very fifties retro jazz style look to it, a very old 1960s cover, you know, with the stereo & stereophonic, and high fidelity, stuff like that. We are a traditional ska band, so we want to...

Try and say that visually.

Stefan: Yes. You know, looking through old Jamaican ska albums



General Rudie's debut, "Cooling The Mark" was released on Stomp Ska Canada last fall. In '02, they've already crossed North America once on the *All Skanadian Tour*, and again embark on an extensive tour of the USA. They bring it back to the Club at Water Street 204 North Water Rochester NY June 29. More details call (585)325-5600

from the 1960s, and kind of paying tribute to them. Looking at them and trying to do that... 'Cause some of that stuff is really very cool. (Phil interrupts) Did you move the car? Can I have the keys?

About how long 'til home?

Nicky: Six hours

I think we'd better cut it out. Anything else? This is not the most recent, but something to read anyway. The Speakeasies just took my last 006. Thanks again for your time.

Stefan: oh hoi polloi, that's a... (pauses) Is that the Exploited? Don't they have a song called Oi Polloi!?

Some oi! band, a Christian pop band, some Boise band too... means the common people, Greek or Hebrew in origin depending who you ask. The Three Stooges used it too.

Nicky: (flipping through) This looks good. Do you have a web page? We'll link you.

Phil: (enters again, randomly and out of breath) And I wasn't even wearing my shoes!

Thanks. Do you have a pen?

WRITE
generalrudie@hotmail.com
 Conducted on 01 April 01
 for HP! skazine at
 Water Street in Rochester
 (Used as promo for 6/29
 & we didn't wanna waste it)

hpska.com

blackouts!

GENERALrudie

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+ Amy Ryan and
the Operatives

doors 7pm
music 8pm

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Sat. June 29th

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