

# Reviewers take Final look at fish, Heads, Smithereens

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buying and further bury them, and the label deserves contempt if that is the reason.

The CD version marks yet another first and in that technology. Besides fifty-some minutes of music, the disc is supposedly encoded with all the album's lyrics, instrumentation, chords and other information. I cannot attest to this because it requires yet another expensive machine to get all this off.

For the time being, I'm pleased enough with the album, so I think I'll pass on the new gimmicks.

—Trevor McArthur



Courtesy of Pasmort Records

### Final Conflict "Ashes to Ashes" Pasmort Records

Most people feel that the mixing of punk and heavy metal into a "crossover" sound was ultimately to the demise of the punk scene. The heavy metal scene gained many new converts and the ranks of the punks were thinned. The punk ethic was largely co-opted by the crossover trend. Despite this, some punk bands have been influenced by the heavy metal sound and have still retained a punk "philosophy."

Final Conflict is one such band. Musically, they are more metal than punk, but their appearance, ideas, and audience are more punk than metal.

Final Conflict released a 15-song, self-titled demo tape about two years ago which introduced listeners to their politically-oriented thrashmetal sound. Their new album, "Ashes to Ashes," has nine songs from the demo tape and five new songs. The recording quality on the album is much better and shows the band's progression over a two-year period.

The songs are longer and less repetitive now, with occasional dual vocals and brief guitar solos. The vocal style lies somewhere between

singing and chanting and the lyrics are fairly complex. Unlike almost every other hard-core band around today, the vocalist did not write most of the songs on this album.

Most of the songs are about political issues and are peace-oriented, although there are two curious exceptions ("Crucifixion" and "Abolish Police") which both have a latent acceptance of violence.

War and disarmament are two common themes on the album, being mentioned in eight of the songs. In "Constant Fear," the urgency of nuclear disarmament is addressed:

*"The point of disarmament can never be stressed so desperately How long must we wait for some morbid leader to lose his temper?"*

And again in "Selfrighteous Pigs": *"There can be no retribution for all the maimed and slaughtered Except a chest full of pins and self-righteous honor"*

Such gloom is juxtaposed against visions of hope and calls to action.

Final Conflict includes a 16-page booklet with the album. The booklet is filled with the band's thoughts on peace and disarmament. Constructive visions of hope are more apparent in the booklet than in the song lyrics, but both go together in a message that seeks to keep the world from turning itself into ashes.

— Bryan Peterson



Courtesy of Trout Mystery

### Trout Mystery "Trout Mystery" Independently Produced Cassette

The most immediately striking thing about this tape, released by Lincoln band Trout Mystery, is that this band can obviously do a wide variety of things. This is definitely the most adventurous of the many local releases of the last couple of months.

As musicians, the members of

Trout Mystery have enough talent to adopt just about any style they choose, while as a band, they always manage to make the songs their own.

Guitarists Chris Albright and Dave Sullivan approach two-guitar songwriting in a number of different ways, ranging from the simultaneous power chords of "Human Error," to combinations of more intricate parts in "Lick Me" and "Standing on String."

All of this is backed up by the solid playing of bassist Terry Pieper and drummer John Fleischli, on tape at least one of the tightest rhythm sections among Lincoln's alternative bands.

But it's the gritty, tuneless, sort of perversely appealing vocal style of Sullivan and especially Albright that adds a little distinctiveness to their songs.

The songs on this tape may even be a little too varied for their own good. Side 1 finds the band, whose live shows are known for goofy antics and sometimes odd cover selections, possibly attempting to lean too far to the serious side. The three songs on this side are all pretty good, but they lack the upbeat, screwball spark that is an essential part of their best songs.

The four songs on Side 2 find Trout Mystery at its best, though, and they end the tape perfectly with a warped acoustic version of "Religion," their powerhouse live show-closer. It features crazed whoops and yells, twisted acoustic guitar licks and lyrics about a girl "chock-full of Jesus." And, whether they like or not, this is the kind of thing Trout Mystery does best.

— Mark Lage



Courtesy Enigma Records

### The Smithereens "Green Thoughts" Enigma

After a highly acclaimed and unexpectedly popular debut album, "Especially For You," the Smithereens are back with another strong collection that puts to rest worries about the usual sophomore jinx.

As with "Especially For You," "Green Thoughts" is also produced by Don Dixon, who's at his best when bringing out some of the prettier, more melodic qualities of raw-energy bar bands.

The crunching rhythm section of bassist Mike Mesaros and drummer Dennis Diken, along with guitarist Jim Babjak, and vocalist Pat DiNizio makes for an unmistakable sound of attention-grabbing intensity.

Songwriter DiNizio has an obvious penchant for a pop hook that snags the unwary listener right away, and doesn't let go until they've completely absorbed his contemplative longing and hard-hitting imagery.

Starting the album off is "Only A Memory," which harkens back to the last album's "Behind the Wall of Sleep." Both songs contain the same

explosive rhythms and melodic impact, and similarly ironic twists of image-laden phrases. One thing has changed, however.

Last time, DiNizio was an admirer from afar, looking up at that elusive Girl of Perfection, and thinking of her from "behind a wall of sleep."

Then he got the girl. Now she's no longer a mere spectre of the imagination, but she's still just a dream, and "only a memory."

Phrases like "broken bits of you and me" complete the crushing finality of it all. Just as with "Wall of Sleep," "Only A Memory" greets the listener with a guitar-drenched, solid, propulsive rhythm that never lets up.

The rest of the album is filled with more of DiNizio's "Green Thoughts," some set to more of the same kind of hard-hitting assault, but mostly to soft, soulful, minor-key ballads with the inestimable vocal talents of Marti Jones in the background.

— Geoff McMurtry



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