

Offbeat groups Fugazi, MDC praised

By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

Begin with the raw energy of punk, then practice and polish for nearly a decade. Then write some angry, ethereal, concerned lyrics and deliver them with feeling. All the while, maintain a commitment to the grass-roots music underground.

The result is Fugazi. Fugazi vocalist Ian MacKaye comes about as close to being a punk icon as a person can. Even so, the former vocalist of legendary DC hardcore band Minor Threat refuses to base his singing for Fugazi on past reputation.

Members of Fugazi also have connections with the DC bands Rites of Spring and Beefeater -- but Fugazi clearly is its own band.

"To base this band on past reputations is to belittle the band. We are independent of all that. This band is legitimate as itself," said MacKaye in a 1988 "Maximum Rockroll" interview.

From the first song on the "Margin Walker" EP, the listener hears a unique sound and a sense of integrity which goes far beyond past reputations.

"Yes I know this is politically correct/But it comes to you spiritually direct/An attempt to thoughtfully affect/Your way of thinking," begins the song "And the Same." That introduction provides a good

synopsis of what this EP is all about, although it fails to mention that the music is damned good as well.

Each of these six songs has its own way of grabbing the listener and asking for more attention.

There is an inventiveness which flows through this release, found in stuttering guitar scrawls and dancing lyric howls, in practiced pauses and potent prose.

Fugazi puts as much effort into every live show as on this release. That creative concern -- which leads the band to do things like invite rowdy crowd members on stage to sing rather than watch them pummel people in the crowd -- makes "Margin Walker" one of the strongest underground releases of past months.

"Outrage...but then they say/ Anytime but now/Anywhere but here/Anyone but me."
- Fugazi, "Burning Too"

MDC's fifth studio album, "Metal Devil Cokes," continues the San Francisco thrash band's whacky punk blasts and serious political rants.

From a cover of The Clovers' "Love Potion No. 9" to "Dirty Harry for President" to a recipe for "Tofu Spaghetti," it is all here. "Metal Devil Cokes" might be pushing the MDC theme a little

far. The band changes the meaning of its name for each release, but always will be associated with its first album, "Millions of Dead Cops."

The band has mellowed a bit since that first album. Oh, the thrash sounds are as fast as ever and the lyrics are just as blunt, but the songs are more constructive and structured than in the past.

Of course, being an MDC release, this album has a song about police. This one is couched in terms of Southern redneckism ("Deep in the Heart") and is thus a little less offensive -- but only a little.

MDC remains an activist band, firing political potshots in nearly every direction, covering the woes of migrant farm workers, the environment and a "dupe for the RCP."

At the same time, the band members know how to have fun, as with "Knucklehead" and a slightly altered "Love Potion No. 9."

Then there is "Tofu Spaghetti," a recipe for a protein-efficient vegetarian meal set to a thrash beat. "World hunger is so senseless and sad/But what can one person do?/I've been able to put together a recipe/For sharing the resources more accessibly."

Three songs later comes "Acid Reindeer," which begins as an acoustic love song and ends as a dirge-like litany of environmental dangers.

And on the band goes, using

humor, rhetoric and a polished thrash sound to engage and entertain.

Gordon Fraser has been replaced by Eric Calhoun on guitar, but the other three original members of MDC remain, pouring out tightly delivered songs and continuing a moving blend of humor and anger.

Fugazi and MDC records were provided by Project Import Records.

the
fifth
column
album review

Blow

Continued from Page 7

Boxer," "Born in the USA" and "(The Train They Call) The City of New Orleans." These are the songs that will identify young Americans as Americans. And as Neenan and Hancock say in their book, readers should take time to reflect on what it means to be an American. For once, they might be serious.

"Let's Blow Through Europe" is entertaining, offers good advice and doesn't cost too much. What more could you ask for from a student travel book?

Dance

Continued from Page 7

that her dance majors could handle it.

"It's very challenging for the students because they have to maintain their characterizations, their stamina level and their technical level, under one flag, for the entire evening. It requires a degree of professionalism that's rather advanced at this point in their training," Milan said.

Milan said she was worried about people's preconceived ideas about dance.

"I'm just hoping that the audience will be able to relax, and enjoy and grow with the characters as the evening progresses."

"The Stone Basin" will show at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday and 8 p.m. Feb. 20-24. Tickets are available at the Theatre & Dance box office, located on the first floor of Temple Building, 12th and R streets.

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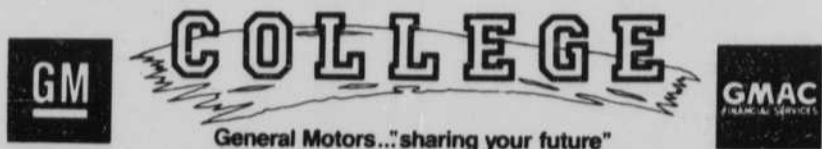
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	148 Wanted

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32 Counseling	
34 Floral	
36 Health & Fitness	
38 Insurance	
40 Instruction	
42 Job Placement	
44 Legal	
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