



Courtesy of Big Chief Records
Agony Column

Agony Column's new album one of the summer's best

By Michael Deeds
Senior Editor

Agony Column
"Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles"
Big Chief

Using a few brave words of their own, Agony Column dubbed their sound a "hellbilly deathmetal on-



slaught" on the back of their last album, "God, Guns & Guts." "Deathmetal onslaught" may not be completely accurate, as it somehow insinuates Slayer-like speed.

But "Hellbilly." Hmm. Hailing from Austin, Texas, this raunchy quartet has emerged from the studio again, this time with "Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles," the raunchy full-length follow up to their live EP, "Agony Column Comes Alive."

Combining bayou blues with Motorhead shock-rhythms, Agony Column comes across this shot as a more mature, but still self-parodying bunch of demonic goat's head ropers. From the sub-rappish rhythm

guitar of "Angel of Def" to the pig-sampling prelude to "Hillbilly Blues," these guys pass out dripping-fresh meat in a stable of stale, rotting deathmetal band carcasses.

Vocalist Richard Turner slides easily from growl to baritone and on to a falsetto shriek that would curdle Axl Rose's blood. Meanwhile, guitarist Stuart Laurence spews out a constant barrage of Celtic Frost-style riffs that are short on complexity, but long on catchiness. And while the band does lean for the speedmetal point on a few tunes, they never hit overdrive and force Turner into the auctioneer role that plagues so many vocalists.

Most often, Agony Column stays in mid-metal gears, pulling a few clichés out of the basket of fun, and ripping out good old rockabilly death sounds rounded with screaming whammy climbs. These guys sound like they shoot pool between takes and spit tobacco on their strings for that extra deep down-South twang.

"Brave Words" is the band's best effort yet -- the production is nicely raw and what these guys play, they play well. The members of Agony Column are as lighthearted as they are serious, and do the deathmetal genre justice. "Brave Words" is one of the freshest albums to hit the metal market this summer.

Fair

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midway is the '80s form of freak show, evidently adapted during the Nancy Reagan era.

AMY: "Still alive inside. One trip too many," said the billboards outside the trailer.

"If we can keep one boy or girl from turning to drugs through this exhibit, then all our travels, worldwide, will not have been in vain."

See Billy Reed, the boy destroyed by drugs.

The premise of the show is probably a good one. Naive teenagers pay to walk around a cage and peer at Billy, a guy who looks as if he hasn't blinked in two years and beats on the bars of his cage for jollies.

Billy dropped too much acid and now believes his dead boyhood friend has been reincarnated in a two-foot-long boa constrictor, according to the sign on the inside of the cage.

MICHAEL: No doubt about it, Billy's got a problem, but whether or not it's drugs is questionable.

AMY: The show lost any sense of realism when we saw the sign that said Billy would stick nails up his nose if you dropped 50 cents in his cage.

Great. Billy is supposed to be emotionally unstable, so you can't engage him in conversation, yet you can pay him to prod his honker.

We looked around for the rest of the freak shows that usually accompany a midway, but couldn't find any. The "Dump Bozo in the Water" game had no Bozo and, as far as we could tell, had no water either.

MICHAEL: As far as traveling

carnivals go, the ride situation was par, but not especially impressive -- especially for as much as \$2.50 a ride. The "Moonraker," though quite fun, did not last as long as Van Halen's "Jump," which plowed from four speakers surrounding the ride.

We weren't sure what to try after the Moonraker, so we did the logical thing and visited the fair's beer garden. Beer was \$1.50 -- \$1.75 with tomato juice so that any accidental vomiting became more colorful.

As far as stomach churning goes, we found the "Kamikaze" to be quite unpleasant. And ladies, you must leave your purses on the ground, though the fine carnival gentlemen assured us nobody would touch them.

AMY: When we finally decided to ride the Kamikaze, I was having second thoughts about agreeing to do this story. I still get the same sick feeling in my stomach that I did when I was eight from walking up to a Ferris wheel or roller coaster.

MICHAEL: The Kamikaze is like a giant jackhammer in the belly button; a nasty pendulum that swings you back and forth at high rates of speed. And best of all, unlike the "Ring O' Fire," it doesn't hang upside down for half the evening. Amy loved it.

AMY: Once it got going, anyway. We didn't do much after the Kamikaze. We'd already blown five bucks each for entrance to the fair and about \$15 on rides.

MICHAEL: That's 50 nails up the nose in Billy Reed jargon.

Deeds is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan arts & entertainment editor. Edwards is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan writing coach and Diversions editor.

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