

John "Stabb" Schroeder - Government Issue

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I have to explain about how this all came about. I had covered The Exploited show when they came to Dallas. I had gone with a friend who is a really big punk fan. I enjoyed the show immensely as it was the first punk show yours truly ever went to and I've managed to go to a few more in the interim such as GBH and The Vibrators. A little later on we're discussing punk music and this one girl was trying to get in good with my friend. What's the best way to get in a guy's pants? Make like you're so into whatever he's into. So she goes on about how much she loves punk music and I ask her what punk bands she is into and she goes on about The Ramones and The Misfits. Now by the time I know about these groups they are mainstream. By the time I hear about them they are mainstream and I wanted to hear about some bands I had not heard about. My friend tells me that if I want to know about punk I have to dig deep. A few months later I had the opportunity to review a DVD of Government Issue. My friend tells me I need to watch this DVD so I did and then he tells me I need to find John Stabb and talk to him. So I get my happy ass on the Internet and lo and behold I find John. So here is the tale of John and Government Issue and the D.C. punk scene such as it was.

Tell me about the '80s punk scene in Washington, D.C.

It was definitely a really great time. I'd say I have a lot of heartfelt memories for '80 to '85. It was just a really sincere scene with a bunch of other teens that I could relate to. During my school years I always felt like a complete outsider with everything that was going on. I was really shy and withdrawn and I got picked on a lot and beat up. So basically once I got out of high school, a friend of mine named Pete Murray who lived down the street from my parents house in Rockville, MD wanted to form a band. At that point I was just starting to get into some of the bands that were more like new wave. I was into Blondie and The Cars and even in 1979 I would carry around a portable eight track tape player in high school and listen to Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers. I'd get a lot of flack from other high school people in classes just saying "turn that punk rock shit off. Play Boston and Skynyrd." I was like no, I'm not into that stuff. I started veering away from a lot of the normal radio mainstream rock stuff at the time because I was just

getting really bored with it. A friend of mine had just basically turned me on to a lot of these other bands that opened up for big arena rock monsters like KISS. He said he saw this punk rock band Cheap Trick open up for KISS in '79 and they were really pretty cool and he has a record by them. I said cool, I'll check it out. I really wanted to get into some of that stuff and by the time I got out of high school Pete Murray, who went to the same high school, and I tried to form our own band and he was going to be the singer and the guitarist and he told me to go out and buy a drum set. He said he'd teach me how to play and give me a few lessons. I was stupid enough to go out and buy a drum set in late '79 and basically I figured I could play. After banging around and making a racket in my parents' basement much to their probably annoyance, I couldn't pick up a beat to save my life. I decided that wasn't really for me but I thought he was amazing on guitar and everything he could play. Sort of amateur versions of Clash and Sex Pistols songs. I thought this was awesome and we had to form a band and we'd worry about a bassist later. He said we'd call it The Stab and he wrote lyrics and he would be singer and guitarist and I'd be playing the drums. That didn't really pan out too well after we hooked up with other people. From there I had all this anger and frustration and just hostility towards the world in general from being a human punching bag throughout my school years and never feeling I really fit in. I wanted to come out and make records and be in a punk band to attack the world for all the injustices I'd been put through in my own life. We formed this thing and I ended up being the vocalist because Pete wasn't making it to some practices for a while. We actually hooked up with the original drummer from Government Issue, Mark Alberstadt, who was playing in another techno progressive band. He and his brother joined up with Pete and I and then Pete had to go off to junior college and we really wanted to do the songs. I ended up being forced into being the singer and I thought that if Johnny Rotten could do this then I could do it. I would just scream away without even a microphone while they were playing and they were pretty accomplished musicians. There was this guy named John Berger on bass. We ended up finding him in line when I went to buy the drum set. He used to be in the Chicago punk rock band called The Lines. He was a pretty good bassist and Kenny Alberstadt, Mark's brother, was a really good guitarist and we were jamming and I got a cheap Sears microphone. God forbid I could actually hear myself over the bass. I just did that and after other people phased out of the original G.I. lineup with John Barry, Mark Alberstadt, Brian Gay, and myself, we got into the punk rock and hardcore scene in the very beginning. The introduction to it in a way. I know other bands like Bad Brains had been around since '79 and we got into it by the winter of '80 within finally doing our first show at a place called D.C. Space. This little two night festival of all these bands was called The Unheard Music Festival. It was Minor Threat's second show. It was SOA's second show. There were other bands on there like The Slicky Boys and these other bands from the D.C. scene. The Untouchables. We went on there and at the time our drummer couldn't make it because he was really sick. He thought we should still do the show and we were still called The Stab at that point and he said he'd get a friend of his like Rich the drummer from The Untouchables to play with us those nights. We thought that would be cool but then I remembered a friend of mine who would come over and jam on the drums while we did our own thing. I thought, let him play since he knows our stuff a little bit better, even though it was just a bunch of noise anyway and we could barely play our instruments except for Mark Alberstadt who was a really accomplished

drummer. He had already done that in the school band and actually learned to read music as opposed to just making it up like DIY. We went and did this two day festival thing and we're calling ourselves The Stab. My band mates thought the name was cheesy. They wanted to come up with something better. I went and saw one of the biggest breakthrough shows for me in the whole punk scene called Black Market Baby play at a club called Psychodelia, a little place in Maryland and they just blew me away. At the time I was looking for a name for the band to change it and they had a song called "World Of War" where it says "I want a war, I want to be a G.I." and I thought let's go for G.I. and they were okay with it. We were going to play the show as G.I. but since Mark wasn't there we decided at the last minute that we were going to call ourselves The Substitutes because we had a substitute drummer two nights in a row and we went with it. The scene was really into it even though we were so nervous that they would be playing the chorus to one song and I'd be screaming out the lyrics to another song. It was a big mess but a lot of bands played there and it was really cool. In general from there on, I just really felt part of something and it really felt like you were part of something at the time when there were only about five or six bands tops in the scene and it hadn't really gotten out of control yet. It was just one big co-mingling of friends and we'd all go out and everybody supported each other's bands. The SOA guys would support G.I. and The Minor Threat people. We all lived for the shows every time a band was playing a show and to even play a show in D.C. People think there was so much going on at the beginning and that we had shows coming out of our ears. We might have played 10 shows out of one year but every time one show happened, we made that a huge event. It was just really great and I definitely hold a lot of really good memories for those times just because there was such a naivety and innocence about it. We were all a bunch of kids that were basically on the same wavelength. We all had a bunch of anger towards everything. They were some really great days and down the line it just got to be a little out of control. There were too many bands and Government Issue by late '85 became the dinosaurs on the scene. Minor Threat had broken up and had gotten back together but at the time they had taken a lull and broken up. We got their bassist, Brian Baker, to join up with us on bass and then he switched to guitar and it was almost like we filled a void that Minor Threat left at the time. Minor Threat was starting to get at that point a lot of bone headed jocks and friends of friends coming to shows and starting fights. It really affected the innocence and the naivety was lost. The days I really treasure the most were the early days from about 1980 to 1985. At that things got a little out of control and we became the dinosaurs on the scene along with Marginal Man and Scream because we had been around a little longer than most of the other bands and there was this revolution summer thing that came up with all these bands. They decided to have their own thing and put a little bit more of a political slant into things and really going to protests and doing all of these things. We were just making our music and touring around and getting into it and putting out albums. We were starting to be thought of as the old geezers and these bands in the revolution summer like Rites Of Spring and various bands like that, did they really want to play with the dinosaurs? They wanted to do their own thing so we were shut out of that whole world. We did our thing and we ended up playing almost little mini arena type shows and they became really big freak shows with bigger name bands at the time like opening up for Dead Kennedys and bands that I used to really worship in the early days and DOA and all these different shows. A lot of friends of ours would say they

really love us and love our music but they won't go see our show because it ends up being a big freak show and they don't have a good time there. I said I totally understand. We went through a lot of stuff in Government Issue that towards the end, everybody was going into various musical directions and I used to joke towards the end that we had creative differences. I wanted to do something creative and they didn't. It was just more or less that everybody wanted to do different things. It just got to be a little too much and that was time to pack it in. By '89 it was where we were paying to play too much and we were getting ripped off a little too much and things were not really turning out the way that we'd hoped it would be. We'd hoped by a couple of our later albums that we'd be making a living or at least paying our light bill and we still weren't. We thought, we've got all this college recognition and airplay and great press but great press doesn't pay your bills. Everything was sunk into it so much that it got to be a little too much. I hate to say it but I was thinking a little too much about the money and wanting to really get signed to a major label so we can be on the same level as The Replacements or Soul Asylum. It wasn't about to happen. Everybody said that we'd eat shit for at least another year and we'd gotten away from the radical skinheads. We started having neo-nazi national fronts and skinhead people coming to shows. When we played out of town and that got to be pretty ugly, we'd have to have police protection to get out of places for having us thrown out. It got to be no more fun anymore and it was losing its charm down the line. We started to pack it in. The scene was a hotbed of creative energy from at least 1980 to 1989 and then other bands came along after that and there was still a lot of creative talent out there. It was a really great time to be part of but I really hold the best memories of the time I really treasured the most which were the early years. That's what the D.C. scene was in a way.

I think it's sad when people have to come in and fuck things up. To me racism and sexism are mental illnesses. You have something wrong in your head if you run around thinking having a white skin makes you somehow a superior human being. At the end of the day we all eat, shit, and die.

That's definitely true. I agree with you about how stupid it really got. It got to the point where we played a show in about '86 where everything that could possibly go wrong with our band was going wrong. It was like everyday a different piece was falling apart. It was like writing a diary. "Day 12: Athens, GA. Side door falls off." I wrote a big diary. It was the Miserable Tour Repair tour of 1986 and we went across country and just ran into some pretty ugly elements. We had never seen much of that in our own town. We had some dumb kids that were part of the skinhead thing and they were following bands like Iron Cross which they were a good band and I was friends with Sab but yet their following got to be a little too stupid. They really worshipped the oi scene in England and they were a little misguided to say the least. We'd run into people with SS armbands and "sieg heiling" us in the middle of our set in Memphis, TN and we're like what the fuck is this? We got up on stage and said that we didn't really want them here and nobody else really wants them here and our songs are not about hating people and Nazism. Our first EP Let's Bowl was my attack the world EP where I wanted to get everything out. After that I had a lot more mixed up relationship songs. A lot of the stuff I was writing to me were love songs but there were kids going nuts, slamming and stage diving to it. I was

like okay, "These Boots Were Made For Walking" is kind of a pissy song but if you guys want to mosh to it, fine. Okay. We'd run into this stuff and say "look, we're not about this but you can get your money back at the door. We'll pay your money back." Then they stuck around and some kid got fed up with himself of seeing it out there and he hit someone or got it into it and all of a sudden 12 of them pounced on him. They started pounding and we stopped our set and we're like this is just not cool and they got thrown out. Then they're up the road in some shopping center waiting for us with boards and sticks and we had to literally call the police to come down and get us out of there alive. It was really uncool and then down the line we played in a reservoir. An illegal setup thing with a generator in the middle of Las Vegas in the desert and as we arrived there, we'd just had this misery of Memphis, TN a couple of weeks before and it was fresh in our minds, and all of a sudden we arrive there to play this illegal show and no one had informed us or clued us into what was going on out there. Some people think we really had the balls to do it but we were foolish. We got tired of playing with other bands' PA systems on stage and we were tired of sounding like Josie And The Pussycats so we had a friend of ours that roadied for us. His name was Robert Bowers and he owned half of a sound company in Morgantown, WV. We paid him basically to have half of his sound company in the back of a U-Haul trailer and towed it with us. We could play on stage and have a really good sound. He would mix us and everything and we'd rent out the stuff to other clubs saying "well, you've got this crappy sound system. We could rent this out to you" and they were like "yeah, sure. Let's do it." We'd get out there with this whole monster sound system and cabinets and we towed this thing in a U-Haul trailer in Las Vegas. As we arrive up there, I see on the walls of this reservoir shit like "Jews must die" and "niggers suck". I was like wait a minute, what's going on here? They're like "oh, we have small Nazi contentions to come here but don't worry, they won't mess with you. They usually get drunk and smash some bottles up on the side." I didn't think this was cool but we had to play the show and we felt like total prostitutes at the end of it because we needed the money to get to the next town. We were being ripped off by shady promoters and club owners and all this stuff going on. I was like wait, a minute. What happened? I thought we put out several albums and we have all this great press and things should be better than this. We were getting cheated worse than ever towards one of our last few tours across country and we played the show. Guys in full storm trooper outfits were goose stepping in front of us and the power went out at one point. Our soundman was holding on to his soundboard and thinking that we were all going to die now. Our guitarist said to just stay cool and don't say anything about it because we could be killed out here in the middle of the desert playing to 50 kids and 10 Nazi skinheads. I didn't say anything because I knew we had to get to the next town and it just built up within us to a point where I just snapped and it was a pretty immature thing to do. After the show, I felt like total crap for doing the show and I decided we would never play in this place again. We would tell everyone and notify the whole punk rock network and every band that tours and tell them to never play for these guys because this isn't cool. We're not about this Nazi thing and it was really lame that we had to do this but we had to do it just to get money for gas to get to the next town. This kid comes up to me and he's obviously a misguided skinhead kid and he told me it was a really good set and he wanted to shake my hand. I asked him if he was part of this Nazi thing and he told me he was. I told him that I didn't want to shake his hand and didn't even want to know him and I walked away.

It built up in me more and more and then when he came back he told me that I don't even know about their movement. I finally snapped and all of this built up from just this one show and the Memphis show and I told him not to like us. Don't like what we do. Go home. Burn your G.I. records. I don't want you to like me. My girlfriend at the time had flown out to save the band when we had a full scale riot about a couple of shows before this reservoir show. We played in San Diego with a band called The Vandals which I will never let them live this down. Every time people talk about how great they are and that they're a really cool band, they're pieces of shit. They came out and the drummer thought it was really funny to have a big swastika painted on his kick drum. The singer in the middle of the set after some black shaved head girl had said that they sucked, said to her that they liked Negro music and it got interpreted to be the other word. I thought he said that from the back and then she slapped him and he slapped her back. The whole audience wound up beating the hell out of The Vandals, chased them and their roadies out of the place, and then started destroying everything on stage. That night was a night that we let these guys rent out our PA system and that was really, really ugly. We thought that was the end of the tour, this sucked, things had gone miserably all ready, and here our equipment is getting smashed. Basically my guitarist had called the police and when they arrived, everybody rushed out of there. It was a seedy, ghetto kind of neighborhood in San Diego and we started collecting all the damage and finding out what we still had left and we had 12 microphones stolen from us. We had a mid range cabinet, I don't know how the hell someone actually left the place carrying that, because these things weigh a ton. It was like oh great, now we owe this guy for the sound company and he was practically crying over all this equipment and we told him we'd pay him for it. He got paid really well to be our driver and soundman and whatever else. Even all the merchandise we brought and kept sending back home more money to get more t-shirts made, we were a month into a whole month worth of dates in Texas and it was like here is your \$100, here is your \$100, and I got to send that home to pay just a mere change of my rent. My girlfriend thought at the time that we'd really do well on this tour and she hoped things would go well. We were struggling our asses off. Things had gone so miserably that I almost wanted to pack it in. I told the band that I couldn't deal with this anymore. It just wasn't a cool scene. I didn't want to do it anymore because it sucked and I'm going to call my brother who works for United Airlines as an engineer and beg him to lend me money for plane fare and I'm going back home. I'll work a crappy job and not do this punk rock thing anymore. The girlfriend at the time flew out and saved the band from falling apart but she was there at this Las Vegas show. After I said this heated statement to this kid, she said that was really stupid and get in the van now because all these guys are going to get really angry. I said yeah, I know. I was in there and we were all loaded up and we felt really miserable for playing this show to these people in storm trooper outfits and SS armbands. We were really just angry and pissed off and miserable. Then out of the blue when we were all loaded up to get out of there, the promoter asked where they got those boards and here's a bunch of drunk skinheads. Huge guys that tower over us and with necks as big as tree trunks and looking like Rollins. If you can imagine a bunch of drunk Nazi Henry Rollins's coming after you and we were like "oh shit, let's get out of here." Our van wouldn't start and we thought we were going to die and then we finally got it started and got out of there. They were walking real slow because they were all drunk and hobbling. They had these huge pieces of lumber in their hands coming after

us and it was all because of what I said. We felt like we'll never play in that town and we'll never do these shows. We'll inform everyone we know and tell every magazine to not play for this guy in Las Vegas who sets up shows. I asked him why he even has these shows and he said he could understand our reasoning. He said he didn't want to seem like he was defeated by all this. He wasn't going to let them ruin what he really wanted to do and that's why he wanted bands like us and other punk bands. He said he was going to still put on shows and not kowtow to these Nazi skinhead guys. I thought it was really cool that he wanted to do this but he should let people know in advance what's going to happen here and what they're in store for. They didn't at all with us. They could have let us know they have a few skinheads but come on down anyway. They got really ugly even towards the end of the D.C. scene. One particular show we played was at a place called WSG Radio Hall which was a venue where a lot of go-go bands, a lot of trouble funk, and a lot of other bands played. It was real close to a radio tower and you could actually have that Spinal Tap moment that everybody lives for and have radio coming out of your speakers and you're on stage going "wait a minute. What is that? Isn't the local station DC 101?" I remember that a lot of things had built up and anything was flamboyant. I was really influenced in the early days by Jack Grisham from TSOL about just wearing things to irritate people. I wanted to make a statement and shake people up and I wasn't really trying to have people like us. I was more in the vein of what Jack or Joe Biafra did and was just trying to have a performance thing where people would be a little irritated and shaken up by it. I wore everything from women's pantsuits to an electric green tuxedo outfit with tails and my bondage clown pants that I had my mom sew zippers on. They were these giant clown pants I got from a thrift shop. I'd be out there doing these flamboyant performances and down the line all the skinheads thought I was a fag and that John Stabb is gay and his bassist is gay. I did everything to not discourage it. I went out of my way and said "okay, all you skinheads want to kiss me tonight?" I just fucked with them and I wasn't going to totally be in fear of them. It all built up to a point where we played this show and I remember I was on stage and I was hearing the radio come out of the speakers and it was one huge freak show. We were playing with GWAR and this was before GWAR even had a following. They came down to D.C. and they had played a show at some little tiny lesbian bar in D.C. and my band mates, John Robinson and Tom Lile, both saw them. They were raving on and on about how great and godlike this band GWAR was and they opened up for Slapshot which was a Boston hardcore band that had a real hardcore stance and they were all into hockey. A lot of bands from the hardcore scene were all about the sports and putting sports into their hardcore. I was always so against that. I've never liked football or sports and this wasn't something I wanted to be interspersed with my music scene. It was fine if those guys wanted to be boneheads and go out and watch hockey games but don't start wearing hockey jerseys on stage. That really disgusts me still to this day, that sports-rock connection. It's still annoying to me. Leave them separate for Christ's sake. I don't like it but that's just me. I'm probably one of the few last males on earth that is not a sports fan. I'm not someone that likes punk rock and likes music and still has to go see a football game or a baseball game. That's not my thing. To me, slam dancing and the stage diving and all the energy that was released was our own thing. That was as close to sports as I ever wanted to get to. It was funny that this band GWAR played right after us and all of these people didn't know what they were in for at all. We didn't even know what they were like except for two members and I was

told they have decapitations and giant Viking outfits. I wondered how the hell they pull that off in a little tiny club and this was a much bigger hall. The kids were all over the stage and people got to the point where every little debutante and her boyfriend and punk rock debs were lining up and laying inside your speakers and inside the monitors and you could never hear yourself. It got to be a whole freak show kind of scene and Tom Lile said that I was the pied piper of hardcore and tell them to move back and get out of our speakers. I told people to move back a little bit because I never wanted to control other people. I've heard about Jack from TSOL. I was not about controlling kids if they listen to me. I was never about that and I wasn't about to preach to people. I just felt lost in that whole situation and I remember I was joking because we were making fun of the fact that things got really stupid. We had played a show with the Dead Kennedys about a week before and I said we weren't going to make this the same freak show that the Dead Kennedys was. It was even worse. Our big PA cabinet was sinking into the stage and about to topple over on the kids in the audience and crush them and kill them. We had friends holding the stuff up as we were playing. I had a whole video of it and one day I want to put out a documentary and show people how to control that. Basically when the radio came out, I asked what would you take as your desert island discs if you had the chance and these kids were yelling out stuff and they were unintelligible and I said I think I'd take The Stain with me. My friend out in Toledo with whom I've been good tight friends with for years had a band called The Stain and they had an EP out where they made fun of their own skinhead scene in Toledo and Detroit. They put out an EP called Skinheads Poke Goats and had a picture of a skinhead drawing where he was poking a goat and he's turned around with his head looking like "what are you doing?" The motion was there. I had this T-shirt of the Skinheads Poke Goats EP and I said I'd take that EP and then you could see even in the video this contention of about 10 trying to be badass skinheads rushing to bust into the crowd to get up right in my face. I was like okay, you want to challenge me and this guy was giving me the finger and was trying to start things with me. I get in my own world half the time and I didn't know until I looked at the video that he was spitting at my feet and giving me the finger. After a while I could see that this guy was trying to get something started and I said under all the boots and spikes we're all brothers here but don't make this a big freak show. This guy was giving me the finger right in my face and I told him he's trying to get a fight started and he's an idiot. I didn't say anything and then he spat in my face. I wasn't ready to fight but I was verbally abusing the guy for the rest of the night. I said these are the people who shave their heads and the people who never get booty in bed. The more and more I said this stuff, their whole cool thing was blown and people were laughing at them. Things like that happen where they say "John Stabb is gay but we're not going to touch him because he knows Ian and they'll probably pounce on us." They never really wanted to touch me until this one show. They actually really wanted to get in my face and be all badass and I thought if they really got to that point, why do we even play for these idiots? I knew there was enough following of our fans that really wanted to see us and really enjoyed us and really got into it. Even towards when I was so pissed off about this, I'd get down really close and sing with these kids and this kid was rubbing the spit off my face. My girlfriend would look at this video stuff and she'd never seen a G.I. show and she said "man, these kids love you. Look, this kid practically wants to make out with you." It was weird. I had probably somewhat of a homosexual following to some extent and I'm not about judging

people. This whole stupid skinhead thing, I just didn't want to be part of it. I didn't want to have it at our shows. Like I said, it just got to be pretty stupid and a freak show scene. I understood why friends would say they didn't really want to see us because they had a bad time. They'd look at all the stupid fights and they'd think that they'd rather see us play to a good audience and things just really got out of control. Towards the end of Minor Threat it got the same way. I don't want to blame them but I think once they broke up at the time, they left this great big void for all the boneheads to suck into the G.I. thing and we were the next rung down from Minor Threat. It's like now they're going to go to our shows and ruin their shows. People just got to a point where they stopped listening to the lyrics. They stopped really caring. They just wanted to get in their stage dives and we saw that at a lot of these shows. My guitarist would hit a chord to see a kid jump out in the crowd and we called them idiots. We were looking at the whole thing and I'm sure Ian got disillusioned with the whole thing as well. He saw it and I saw it at their final show where they played and now we had inherited their following and unfortunately all the cool people that had started out with the scene early on were just phasing out. They were getting into other things and they were not into going to the shows anymore. We had about 10 people we knew at a show and 500 people we didn't. Usually out of that 500 were 200 or more boneheads. It got to be really just stupid. I totally hate playing to an audience that doesn't care. I live for the reaction. I've done that for years. I've always been about the Iggy theory. If people aren't paying attention, do something to make them pay attention to you. He would fall down and have a tantrum and I would go right into their faces as well. I said "okay, you're here. If you're on the stage, you're going to be part of the show." Things got to be pretty ugly sometimes in that situation. I got attacked by 12 angry Italian guys in Milan, Italy for singing to somebody's ex-girlfriend on stage who was just sitting there ignoring the band while we were playing and I'm like "oh, you're part of the show. I'm right in your face." She pushed me away and I was still in her face. Pow, I got hit and I thought I hit the guy. I'm basically pretty blind on stage because I'm nearsighted and I wear glasses but I wouldn't wear glasses on stage to save my life or contacts either. I just don't do it. I thought I hit this guy that hit me. I just snapped and then I got attacked repeatedly by these 12 anti-American Manson youth guys that literally watched Manson documentaries and worshipped Manson. They carved X's in their foreheads. It was really an ugly scene. I knew that sometimes that confrontation would get me into some really hot water but thankfully everything I've done since Government Issue hasn't really had that kind of an audience factor. It hasn't been where you have to say stop the fighting in the middle of a set. Stop your own set and tell people that if they really want to do that stuff, go outside. With Government Issue, I tried to be sarcastic and make jokes about it. If you want to be aggressive, go home and play an aggressive game of Twister. Just don't come to our shows. People didn't listen half the time and it just got to be one big freak show. One big circus and we were definitely the ringleaders after a while unfortunately.

Unfortunately when you have shitty elements like that coming to your shows, then people start associating that fucked up mindset with your band. That can hurt you professionally.

Yeah, definitely. I was just thinking today, I had read an article about a local promoter who used to put on some of these punk funk shows. They mixed with Minor Threat and Troubled Funk. They had G.I. and Troubled Funk. We thought that was a good thing to mix up the whole scenes and show everybody else what their scene and our scene was like. I was never a fan of that go-go stuff. This local promoter went on to do a lot more stuff in the go-go scene, and had just died for some reason. Things got really ugly. We played a show with some Detroit band at the same venue, it was College Hall of Nations at Georgetown University, and it was about a month before. I guess some dumb New York or Detroit skinhead guys smashed up the bathroom and did their little graffiti thing and we got blamed for it basically. We had no idea that they were saying this was Government Issue's fault. It's all their fault. They created this. We go arrive at a show a month later to play with Troubled Funk and we were told there was bad news. There's a court order banning our band from playing this show tonight. We were being blamed for our idiot following. Like a lot of the bands in the old hardcore or punk scene, we were not about the stupidity that happens to ruin chances to play more venues. It was just stupid. It was really dumb for someone to trash a bathroom or do all this Nazi graffiti stuff. A lot of times we'd all say something about it on stage. "Okay, for the idiot that thought it was a really great punk rock thing to do to smash a sink in this venue, this song is for you and it's called 'Asshole'." It just really sucked with the whole mindless destruction scene. That's not what the D.C. punk scene was ever about. I saw a lot of that in California when G.I. went out there on one of our first ever mini tour/vacation/begging for gigs. We were in San Francisco and I was at a house party with Scream that they played and basically it was like a house wrecking party. I got to see all the stuff be destroyed in this person's place and people going nuts. I thought this California thing was really worse than the D.C. thing ever was in the beginning. Down the line we started having some of that ourselves. They think it's punk rock because they see *The Decline Of Western Civilization* and hear about people smashing stuff up in California and then they're going to want to do that in their own hometown.

What kind of metal scene were you guys interested in?

Towards the mid period of G.I. we discovered the first Motley Crue album. We loved it. Tom Lile and Mark Alberstadt and Rob Moss. Rob Moss and I both like our substitute bassist at the time from Artificial Peace, he played this tour with us and we went out of our way to push our sort of metal side and people thought "what's up with that?" This was before the big crossover thing was going on where bands like DRI were crossing over to heavy metal. They cross over the bridge with Satan at the toll booth. At a little California show I was wearing an early Motley Crue "Too Fast For Love" T-shirt and I remember all these punk rock kids asking what was up with that and saying those guys suck. We said no, they're cool. We were really into that stuff and we decided to put out an album that has a lot of metal riffs and me and Rob were really into bands like Ratt and some of the glam metal scene. I wanted to have as much cowbell as humanly possible on our album Joyride and I said make it lots of cowbell. I liked that whole running joke about the Blue Oyster Cult thing. More cowbell, I want to hear more cowbell. I just really wanted a big, loud cowbell like Tommy Lee's cowbell. Then we put out this album and it was funny because all these other magazines like punk rock zines were like "well, this

seems to be their crossover metal album, their commercial attempt at metal." No, we're just having fun. To this day people like Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth said that's one of his favorite G.I. records. One big loud metal buzz and there was this metal influence in there but we weren't about the boneheaded aspects of the metal scene. We weren't about the sex and drugs aspect that a lot of punk bands ended up being into like Black Flag. They were just as bad down the line as Motley Crue or Poison. "Okay, we're going to get blowjobs in the parking lot and everyone has to share the same girl." I thought that was gross. We're about relationships and we're running into all these bands and their groupie scenes. I was never about the groupies back in G.I. and they were always there. It wasn't my scene. They could party on with somebody else. It got to be pretty crazy. There's such a fine line between a lot of the mid period punk scene and some of the really out of control metal band scene. I remember it was pretty funny that Henry thought that TSOL were rock stars but yet they were sharing the same women in the parking lot. TSOL were going out of their way to do their thing and play on stage and he's telling me that Black Flag aren't about what TSOL are about. I said "sure you are. Don't try to convince me they're rock stars. You're being the same thing." That aspect of things always turned me off. I would go up to people at parties my friend Stain would have in Toledo. That town is so hungry and desperate for anything to happen. It's the glass capital of the world. They're known for their jeep factory and it's another trash town USA. Basically four things to do in Toledo are watch TV, go to movies, you can go see bands, or you can have sex with bands. We'd see a lot of that stuff and I'd see these people offering themselves to other bands that were users and I said "have some respect for your body. You don't have to do this." That night they'd still sleep with them. That whole low self-esteem and low self-confidence. People actually think I was pretty self-confident throughout the punk scene. I was pretty insecure as much as they were. I veered away from dealing with all the low self-esteem stuff. I wouldn't share myself with some groupie just because we're on the road and you have these "needs". I have a girlfriend back home and I'll masturbate a lot. Not my thing. It really turned me off. It was pretty sad to see that sort of thing. Me and Jay Robbins would see these people and he would talk to this person for a long time and have this great conversation. Then he's like he lost all respect for them because all of a sudden they're sleeping with this dumbass junkie in a punk rock band that toured through town. A lot of that California scene was like that. They just melded in as bad as the metal thing. There was no difference between them. We went around and Rob was wearing a Motorhead T-shirt and I was wearing my Motley Crue T-shirt and I had my Joan Jett haircut. I was really into Joan Jett and I didn't care if people thought she was pop or bubble gum. She rocks. All the band members were more into really, really hardcore punk stuff. My guitarist was into Finnish hardcore where you can't understand what the hell they're saying and it's really fast. Italian hardcore where you wondered what they were yelling about. Food or something? Spaghetti cacciatore. I couldn't deal with that. I liked my Julian Cope records and my Blondie and I went back to the '80s stuff again. Mid '80s. I started listening to stuff that I got into from the very beginning and felt out of place with what even my band members were going through. Everybody had different tastes. Jay Robbins was into Joy Division. I didn't get into post punk stuff until more recently because I discovered that through my band mates in my own band, The Factory. Discovering how cool a lot of the stuff was, was new to me and at the time Nancy Sinatra was new to us in G.I. We heard that on the radio and we went

“hey, “These Boots Were Made For Walking“. Let’s do a really cool version of that. A punk version.” So we put it on our album Joyride. It became the moshing anthem to all these kids in New York at CBGBs. They’d scream “these boots will walk all over you” and I’m like okay. I was glad they enjoyed the song but it was a snide song about relationships and how things didn’t work out but if they want to make it their anthem, stomp around, and do the moshing circle thing, that’s their thing. It was weird that whole connection. There’s such a fine thread between it.

Yeah, back in those days I got really big into Hanoi Rocks, Motley Crue, Poison, and other various and sundry bands.

It's funny that you were into Poison. My friend Stain has done a lot of freelance journalism for magazines like *Thrasher* and I was in town hanging out with him in Toledo and he asked me to help him interview Rikki Rockett. He said he knew I didn't like the band but he's financing this guy's skateboard company. They're putting out T-shirts and he's coming out with his own company so we went to the hotel. I thought he actually was a really nice guy and he was really smart and he had some really good things to say. Then I lost all respect for him once he hooked up with two little chubby little high school girls in the bathroom. We had to wait for him at this hotel. One of my favorite stories is about that night. My friend Stain to this day loves how I ruined Rikki Rockett's whole night. We hung out with the guy over dinner and he ended up saying things that really just blew my mind. He was saying they were from Mechanicsburg, PA and were really into the punk thing. They really liked Government Issue and all the bands and I was like what, that's interesting. I couldn't say that I was a big fan of his music too but I was being diplomatic about the whole thing and helping Stain interview him. All these kids wanted their *Circus* magazine pinup of Rikki Rockett signed and they had to wait until we were finished with dinner. He asked if we wanted drinks and food and he offered to put it on his card and we said we'd buy our own drinks and food. We bought our Cokes and he was shocked. He was like oh my God, somebody actually doesn't want something from me. He was respecting us in a way and we were talking to him. He was talking about how he's anti-apartheid and he had this Navajo girlfriend that he's helping out on a session. She has a great voice and she's beautiful and that he's doing some kind of blues project with her and playing on her album. After this whole conversation I thought he was actually a really nice guy. He talked about how he was in tears after he saw this girl in a wheelchair come to their show and she was a huge fan and she always loved Poison. She got in this car wreck and was brought to the show. I thought this was a guy that's really monogamous with his girlfriend. This so un-arena rock star. It just blew my mind. He's against racism, he cares about people, and then I went to the bathroom. He was finishing up his dinner and we were about to get out of there and then I ran into these two high school girls who told me to ask Rikki to knock on the door because they just wanted to meet him and they love his music. They asked me if I liked Poison and I said no, I'm not into them and I've done my own band for years and it's not really my thing. I'll tell him to knock on the door and they told me they just wanted to get his autograph. So I go up to Rikki who was about ready to leave the table and some things were really embarrassing. This guy comes up about my own age, at this time he must have been about 31, and he's in this complete worship mode to Rikki Rockett and Rikki signed his

little *Circus* magazine pinup. The guy goes "oh my God, I can't believe I'm meeting Rikki Rockett!" He broke down and cried and me and my friend Stain were like oh my God, this is fucking embarrassing. Give me a break. We were laughing in a way and then when I came back, I told Rikki there were a couple of girls who wanted to get his autograph. They're not trying to scam on him because I know he has a girlfriend and my friend Stain is telling me to cool it. Rikki is like sure, sure he'll do this. Then I found out why he said this to me. He went to the bathroom and knocked on the door and he had this big security goon guy and us stand outside. Five minutes later, 10 minutes later, 15 minutes later, and I was like yeah, he's signing something but it's not with a pen. All my respect for him was totally shot. Then my friend Stain asked him what he was doing because he was in there for a long time and Rikki said he fucked them to give them something to remember him by. Stain told me I don't know these rock stars like he does. He worked enough shows with them like the Guns 'N Roses guys and became friends with them. They say how much they love their wives and their girlfriends but then they'll totally scam on the road. I was like what a fucking loser. Then we go to his hotel room and he's getting worshipped by all these Rikki entourage worshipper friends. They're like "oh Rikki that's a great drum solo you played" and he's got these little speakers he just bought for \$500 bucks and he's saying how they're going to put this live unreleased stuff on their next album. My friend shot him completely down without even saying anything to him because he's a drummer himself. Now he does vocals in his own band but he played drums for years. Rikki told him to check out this drum solo and my friend starts tapping away on his knees with his hands and Rikki was totally bummed because he thought he was doing something special and my friend just played it on his knees with his hands and Rikki is just bummed. Then people saw that "oh Rikki's down. Gotta bring his spirits back up. Oh man, Rikki, you rule man." Then all this smoke was in the room and I still to this day cannot stomach cigarette smoke. I smoked pot toward my later years of high school and I would phase out all the bullshit that was going on in my life and getting picked on and I started listening to this music. I just hate cigarette smoke and it makes me sick so I hate being around it. He's smoking and his friends are smoking and I leaned towards my friend and told him I had to get out of the room. I told him I couldn't breathe and he told me that was cool, just wait for him downstairs in the lobby. I go down there and I saw these kids trying to locate the rock stars and Poison was on tour with Warrant and they're trying to bilk information out of the concierge girl and she's saying she doesn't know where they are because they're not staying there. Then they saw me and had seen me talking to Rikki earlier and they asked me what room he was in. I said he left and that he wasn't in the hotel. He's probably out getting laid somewhere else. I was trying not to blow his thing and have these guys come up to his room. I was waiting out there about 15 minutes later and my friend comes down and tells me I ruined Rikki's whole night. He said we were talking and he's a big fan of G.I. and does this dude hate him because he walked out of the room. I couldn't believe this guy who has got all this recognition and people worship him and should have a fucking ego the size of a country is going to be bummed out by one little thing. It ruins his whole night that I walked out of his hotel room. I said I had to leave because of the smoke and I was being diplomatic. I held my temper after I found out he was scamming and didn't call him an asshole. I didn't want to blow my friend's interview for *Thrasher*. My friend said well Rikki is so bummed. It isn't my job to feed his fucking ego. What's funny is I've seen him since that time and he'll

come up to me and ask "what's up? I'm down here for this animal rights thing." One of the weirdest things is I was working for a production company building stages about five or six years ago. I built this big stage buildup for the animal rights thing. Linda Blair was there. It was the more surreal thing I've ever seen in my life. I look out in the crowd and I see Rikki Rockett in between Rue McClanahan from *Golden Girls* and James Cromwell from *Babe*. Rikki is in the middle and I'm like what's wrong with this picture? Really fucking weird. I was in another band at the time called Betty Blue and my bassist tells me Rikki Rockett is here. He told Rikki he was in a band with John Stabb from Government Issue and Rikki said I was a cool guy. I ran into a lot of people where I ended up loving their music and I worked a Lollapalooza years ago and I did mostly second stage but I was part of a 100 person crew building a 65 foot steel stage and then I got to see people like Girls Against Boys and a band from Australia called DMI and Ruby and all of these bands I had never seen and I totally loved them. I was into the guys from Australia and they recognized me and said they couldn't wait to go back to Melbourne and tell them they met John Stabb. I said well thanks, I helped build your stage. It was funny to run into that down the line. I felt like I had been playing long enough on stages for people and now I want to build them and let other people do it. Then down the line I felt like now that I've built enough, I really miss playing on stage and I wanted to be back out there and doing this because I see all these bands coming through town. Even if it's a country and western bluegrass festival and Joe Diffy is singing up there about a bowl full of taters and a cold Budweiser in the refrigerator. I'm like man this is terrible, I miss playing on a big stage. It was funny to actually see how the other side lives by building their stages and seeing these bands and going "well I used to do this too but I built your stage." It's funny with the whole rock star scene. I've seen people have their egos crushed just because I wasn't a huge fan of what they're doing. Then I'm going to ruin someone's entire night by walking out on their worship scene in their little hotel room. To this day that's got to be totally in my book. He'll read it and say "man he still hates me" and be totally crushed. His monumental ego and insecurity will come out again and he'll be like "I can't believe that guy said that about me." I've just seen that kind of stupidity in bands. I'm not here to worship anyone, I'm just here to see their show. If they're nice that's cool but if they're a dick I'm walking away. I've never met Iggy Pop in my life but I've always had a huge admiration for him. There's a part of me that thinks it would be cool and maybe he doesn't know about Government Issue and then again maybe he's a dick and I don't want to meet him in person. I still like his music but I've seen a lot of people that I've liked over the years and then wind up thinking that they're assholes. I know how things go. I've had people tell me over the years that people think I'm a real grumpy guy. One time I was accused of being grumpy because I didn't say much. Of course I was trying to save my voice for the show because I was losing it. I was as hoarse as could be and couldn't talk to anyone so I end up becoming a dick. Things happen and I've always been approachable to people unlike some of the people from the D.C. scene who were standoffish in some ways. I'll talk to anyone anywhere even if I'm in the bathroom taking a leak. You can talk to me in the hallway or out on the street. People are like "I can't believe I'm talking to John Stabb." I'm just another bozo in a band. I just got lucky.

You're re-releasing some of your stuff.

Twenty years after the fact, Government Issue is actually making a profit because we're re-releasing our stuff on Dr. Strange Records. They've been treating us as nothing more than kings. They've been the coolest people in the world and there's not a lot of really honest, sincere labels that I think I can trust out there. Dischord is definitely one of them I can trust and Dr. Strange is another one. I'm really happy that I've actually finally hooked up with a label that's re-releasing our stuff and actually paying us. Quarterly royalties. It's still really not paying my rent so I have to work a normal bullshit job unlike some of my other compadres from the D.C. scene that are practically millionaires but they own a label. People at Dischord I admire at what they've accomplished. People ask why I'm not as big as Henry Rollins. I don't want to be as big as fucking Rollins. I don't want his Manson letters. His collection of psychos that are attracted to him. I don't know how he deals with it. Sometimes he's a nice guy and sometimes he's a real jerk. There's so much worship going on with him. He plays a 2.5 hour performance which he was very specific with me in an email once when I asked him why he was such an asshole after a show. He told me I had no right to judge his off stage performance. Off stage? Everything in life is a performance for him? "I just did a 2.5 hour performance on stage. Who are you to judge my off stage performance?" Give me a fucking break. It's ridiculous that someone would think 24 hours a day, everything they do is a performance. Then I wrote him back and said I thought we were friends. We've known each other from years back. When I see a line of people after a Fugazi show, all I want to do is say hello to my friend Ian. There was a show about six years ago, I had to wait in line to talk to my friend and this girl is telling him that her boyfriend is this huge fan of Minor Threat. She said he wanted to know if he still had his edge. I was like my God, they're still talking about fucking "Straight Edge". It was a song when he was 19 and it talked about obsession. All of a sudden he's created a movement with one fucking song.

What the fuck is that? Straight edge?

Back in those days everywhere we went in California, people would say "hey Government Issue. You're from D.C. You're straight edge right? Look, a beer." I thought that was really charming since we didn't really care if they drank, did lots of sex, or did drugs. We just thought they were idiots for even bothering to try annoy us with that. To label us with that, that was the D.C. band curse. Everyone got it. Thanks a lot Ian. Write a fucking song and everybody who goes to California gets labeled as straight edge. You don't drink, smoke, or do drugs. What planet do these people live on? I joked about that with my band Betty Blue. We're beyond straight edge. We're monk rock. Straight edge is even too radical for us. We're monk rock. We don't drink, smoke, have sex, or listen to loud music. If that's what the whole D.C. scene was about then we wouldn't even be punk rock. On Minor Threat tours, Brian and Lionel were out scamming on girls. Ian was the straight one. He was the one who didn't get involved in all that. I didn't get into the music scene for any of that either. I read about how people started a band to meet chicks.

So you weren't into meeting chicks?

I was a 19 year old virgin until I actually went to a punk rock show. I was too shy and withdrawn to even ask girls out for dates. I sat around and watched porn. I'd go to these

shows and this 35 year old biochemist researcher girl from Pennsylvania took a liking to me and was all over me. I thought that was cool. I had this person stay over my parents' house while they were on a family vacation and had wall to wall sex and I thought I'd found a new toy. This is better than G.I. Joe. I was like a kid in a sex candy shop. It was a new drug. I was definitely all about having sex and there were plenty of us on the D.C. scene that were all about that. We didn't go out of our way to make it a huge issue and score with the groupies. Whatever we did with our girlfriends was our thing. I stopped smoking pot after I got out of high school. I didn't even like the effect it gave me. I dropped acid twice towards the end of G.I. It was fun the first time and really miserable the second time. I experimented with stuff like that and hung out with ex-junkies and alcoholics who wound up overdosing and dying. That makes me more and more anti-drug because I see the creativity of a person totally diminish. It's completely lost with the heavy drugs. I may be straight edge but that doesn't mean I don't drink Smirnoff Ice and have the kind of sex that would be illegal in several states. I just don't smoke. It's a silly thing how people will take one song and create a whole movement out of it. They thought we were this religious cult in D.C. and that couldn't be further from the truth. It even became a word that is actually in the dictionary. What the hell? It's a fucking song title. Now it's become everything people write about in their magazines.

I did an interview with some kid from a band called Himsa. I really enjoy the hardcore underground scene. He told me he was straight edge and I was like what the fuck is that?

It's crazy. Even back in D.C. some of the people who drank and smoked would mess with the straight edge people. Just feeding the fire even more. To this day, people are still about this straight edge thing. For people to still have this ridiculous idea that the D.C. scene was all about these bands that never did drugs, smoked, or had sex. What? Are you fucking out of your mind? I know Ian doesn't talk about it but I'm sure he's slept with his girlfriend plenty of times. He just doesn't bring it up. We joked about it in different bands. There was a lot of stuff going on in D.C. There were junkies in the punk rock scene that we knew. We didn't disown them because they were heroin addicts. They came to shows and they were part of it. There were friends of ours that were notorious scammers. Because I had a lot of female friends, I was thought of as one of the punk rock gigolos in this town. That couldn't be more far fetched. I really just basically knew people. People would see me with a girl at a show and they'd go "look who John Stabb's sleeping with now." I wrote this song called "Notch To My Crotch" and all these kids thought it was my tribute to all the women I notched up on my crotch. They didn't get it. It was a total anti-scammer song. People misinterpret things.

Any other funny stories about people?

This girlfriend at the time had gone to a Samhain show. Over the years I had this running feud with Danzig. The Misfits were one of the worst band I'd ever played with. I'd make fun of Danzig and the band and over the years I had different people roadie for Government Issue who would also hang out and roadie for Samhain. A guy in this one band would drive and roadie for us and he said he told Danzig what I said and now he

wants to kick my ass and kill me. I was going out of my way to be the clown prince of hardcore. I would wear the goofiest outfits. I remember at this one show I was wearing an electric green tuxedo outfit and my hair was all spiky. I had on clown pants and this big clown shirt with big red polka dots and white sleeves. Someone in The Misfits said to my friend Brian that the band was really cool but why does the singer have to dress like a fucking clown. This came from guys who are wearing horror makeup. There were a lot of bands that got made fun of and people made fun of my band. It's expected. Well, Danzig has absolutely no sense of humor. He hears all these things and wants to know where I am so he can kick my ass. All of a sudden he developed a southern accent like he's from the southern region of New Jersey or something. From the Deep South of Passaic. So my friend Mike told him that Danzig was never punk rock and he wears a WWF wrestling belt on stage because he's fat. So he wanted to kick my ass. We were supposed to play a show with Samhain in Baltimore and we put out fliers and all of a sudden we get the word from the promoter that Danzig just wants to play their own set and not have an opening band so we couldn't be part of the show. So I told my girlfriend to tell him that there would have been 500 more people if Government Issue had played because people love us in Baltimore. She goes down and got really hammered and told him "John Stabb..." and he goes "John Stabb? Where is he?" Elvis Danzig wants to kill me. By the time my guitarist tells me "he wants to kill you? He doesn't even know you. Why not write the guy a letter and say you don't know me but you want to kill me?" Give me a fucking break. So I wrote him a letter and said we're both frontmen of bands. The only thing we have in common is that we're vocalists. I just think the bands he's in suck. He's got a great voice. So you want to kill me? So Danzig gets the letter and says he's over me now but now I need to stop writing him letters. What a moron.

People take shit pretty damn seriously.

It's stupid how people will literally think certain things. Me wearing goofy clothes on stage is making people not take us seriously as a punk rock band or a hardcore band. Johnny Liden was wearing totally goofy things for years and trying to get a reaction out of people. That's what I've always been about. I have seen so much rock stardom in the punk scene that turned me off in a lot of ways. I like a lot of the '80s stuff from that period but a lot of these bands these days, a band really needs to pay its dues. It needs to go on the road for five or six years and really struggle its ass off before they get this big contract. It just happens too soon it seems like. A band's around for a couple of years and all of a sudden they get signed and they've got gold albums. All the bands that happened from the early days have paved the way for all these new bubble gum punk bands. It's not something I relate to. Without their instruments they'd be as untalented as 'N Sync without the bad dance moves. It's nothing more than a corporate thing these days. I still like a lot of underground bands and things that lean more towards the pop/punk thing. It's just weird to see these bands be huge like Good Charlotte and the teeny boppers love them and think this is what the punk rock thing is about. Punk rock is literally being afraid to walk down the road from someone with spiked hair who you thought was going to beat you up. Mike from Social Distortion jokes about how years ago it was dangerous to be punk rock. You see someone walking down the road and you stay out of his way because he's menacing. Now it's like I'm really supposed to take this person serious and

get a reaction from some kid who has three or four nose rings and a face like McCauley Caulkin with spiked green hair and freshly shined Doc Martens. It's silly. I don't relate to that at all. The post punk thing is what I'm really getting into these days. That stuff is really new to me even though it's old stuff. When I was in Government Issue in 1982 I was really getting into the psychedelic thing as far as the music. I was discovering bands from the '60s and people were mostly over that stuff. I had just discovered it for myself instead of having to just listen to punk rock. I was so narrow minded in the early punk rock days. I was so into this band or that band. Then I thought I couldn't listen to that because it doesn't fit into punk rock. Down the line I didn't care if it fit in with punk rock. I'm just going to listen to it. I still love bands like Hanoi Rocks. I think they're a great band to this day. On the other hand I don't much care for the New York Dolls who influenced them. A lot of bands that influenced bands, I think it's great they did but I'm not really a fan of the New York Dolls and I don't worship The Ramones but I like some of their records. There were certain things about the California hardcore scene that people in D.C. was so into like Germs. I guess I liked the album. I tried so hard to like his stuff but he couldn't even sing and he was always so wasted on stage. It was a big turn off to see that and I thought our scene had a lot more going for us than California. It was more positive. There were some cool bands out there. It's funny how people have this ultimate judgment about things. I used to be close minded like that too. I hope they finally get a clue and see that they don't have to like stuff because they're told to like it. I used to be like that. I liked certain bands but I thought my friends might not like them so I better keep quiet. I was the one person in Government Issue who was thought of as having wimpy tastes. Pete my drummer was really into KISS and Guns 'N Roses. My guitarist was really into Finnish hardcore stuff. Jay was into Joy Division and a lot of the Chicago bands. I was into The Effigies. I would just sit there with my Julian Cope tapes. If it's something I like I won't be dissuaded to not like it. You look at magazines like *Spin* and *Rolling Stone* and think you're supposed to like Green Day because they're punk rock. People should decide on their own if they really sit back and dig it. You should like what you like. I know I'm just rambling on.

Ah that's okay. Makes for an interesting interview.

The old interviews I did in Government Issue, half the time they'd go "what the hell are you talking about?" About three years ago I found out I have ADHD which is no big surprise. I used to be so hyperactive on stage. People in my band thought I'd be the perfect spokesperson for Jolt cola. I'm actually a little bit more focused now despite this rambling interview. I take Paxil. I'm straight edge. I drink Smirnoff Ice, have lots of sex, and....I drop Paxil! I'm the senior citizen of punk rock. The avenging punk rock godfather. Eventually we all get into that groove. I know people who do drugs and drink hard liquor. The hardest thing I put in my system is Mike's Hard Lemonade with Paxil chasers. People used to think I was on so many different drugs. Back in G.I. we played a show in California and I'm in my own world. People are throwing bottles and other debris and I don't even see what's going on. I'm focused on the songs and caught up in my own world. At this party someone approached me and told me he just knew I did acid. He could tell by the weird way I act on stage. I told him I was a performer and I did my thing. He kept insisting that he just knew I did acid and I couldn't tell him I didn't. I

finally said okay, you're the authority. I do acid. Over the years it's escalated. I'm very performance oriented on stage and do a lot of weird things with my hands and gestures. It's actually upgraded from acid to recently in my band Factory, I have had people ask me if I was on crack. "Were you on crack?" I'm like "what? Are you crazy?" That's good. It's escalated from acid to crack. People tell me I must be on drugs and I tell them "yeah, I am. Paxil."

Dude, acid is last century. Now it's crack.

Yeah, in D.C. me and Mayor Berry sat around and smoked a pipe back in the day.

The Music Video Distributors have reissued a show of yours on DVD.

Oh yeah, I'm pretty excited about that. The Music Video Distributors have definitely given us a really great deal. For years I've wanted to get some of this stuff out there. We just had tons of video footage and they contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in the Flip Side video stuff. People in some circles like my girlfriend's parents are now impressed. Having a whole stack of records out and EPs and T-shirts and all these fans doesn't really impress them but oh, you have a DVD. Now you're really doing something. It's funny that something like that gets you a little bit of respect because it's the new technology.

Did you ever make any money while you were in the punk rock scene?

I never made money in punk rock in the long run. If anything, it might help occasionally to pay the bills. Back when we were apparently doing "so well", people would ask an ex-girlfriend of mine what I was like so she would feed the rumor mill. "He goes out with two hot model blondes on each side when he's out on the town. He's got a huge limo with a Jacuzzi in it." I couldn't believe she was feeding these kids these total lies. People will believe these things. I'm not fucking Michael Jackson. I don't have a whole lot of money. Kids don't understand that half the time.

Tell me about Factory Incident.

We've been around for five years. I got into this post punk thing through the guy who played drums towards the end of Betty Blue which lasted about five years as well. Hopefully this band will last a little longer. He convinced me that I had more to offer than doing this sort of garagy punk rock I was doing in Betty Blue and no one in town was really paying attention. He wanted me to be part of a project with his girlfriend who's now his wife and they're both guitarists. He wanted to play guitar and wanted to do something a little more post punk because he still likes The Smiths. He used to love Morrissey but now he's disappointed with him these days trying to be Elvis. He wanted me to do this and check out what he was doing. He has a friend who was a bassist in another band and another friend who used to play with Betty Blue in another band called Upside Out which was more abrasive clutch metal. He wanted to try something different and new and so did I. It's sparked a whole new interest in music for me again because

things were getting a little tired and a little complacent for the whole thing of just doing punk rock. There's a lot more going on. The two guitar thing is something I've never really dealt with. For me to sing, sometimes it's harder and sometimes it's softer and it was really a challenge for me and the drummer to do. Then we both really got into the fact that we're doing something a little different. He only knew stuff from hardcore metal and his idea of punk rock was bands like Thursday. These bands that everyone calls emo which is a label I still hate. I really loved what they were doing and got into it. Then we started thinking that maybe the most we'd do with it is put out a three song EP and that was guitarist Carl's idea. If we do anything else, maybe play a couple of shows which would be cool but none of us had any idea it would last as long as five years already. We've gone through so many different unpredicted hiatus situations being the fact that my two guitarists take a lot of trips to England because they love the English scene. Now Carl's looking into English citizenship because his mother's from there and they've taken all these trips out there. They thought they could get a cheap place out there and they still have their place in D.C. That's cool. My bassist is now teaching a film course at a university in Baltimore and his wife is about to have a child. That put a damper on our aspect of playing a November sweet little two week tour in Germany because a friend of ours actually runs a booking agency out there in Germany that books everything from Marilyn Manson to all the Epitaph band tours. All you have to do is pay for your plane fare and pay for a band rental and everything else will be provided for it. We were like backline included? That's better than Government Issue ever did in two big European tours where we lost our ass or broke even at the very most. A lot of stuff has gone on. Our drummer got out of the hospital after an operation and he has a lot of relatives on his side of the family and his wife's side of the family who have died recently. More disastrous things couldn't happen to a better band. Out of the whole five years, we've played entirely about 11 shows. All of a sudden we're starting to play some shows and things are rolling and then okay, now we can't play for a while because this is going on with this person or that. I work a job and sometimes I can do it and sometimes I can't. None of us work weekends so that works best. We've gone through a lot of situations where various members couldn't make it to practice or had a lot more going on in their lives. We finally put out our album Red Tape recently and we're really excited and happy with that. Carl has hired a promotion agency just to promote that album and his label Post Fact Records which he started on his own and he's putting out other things besides just Factory Incident on his roster. We've started to get a lot more press and we've had nothing but pretty good reviews. Some people have misinterpreted lyrics extremely. Things have been pretty cool. In that whole five year period of time we've accomplished 11 shows which they're varied from shows in D.C. to Pittsburgh and we played a really good show in Manhattan. We played a great show with a friend of ours from Last Burning Emperors and Big Takeover Fanzine who invited us up on the basis of our three song EP. He liked it so much and wanted us to come up and play with his band. It was fun to network with people and do something different.

How do people feel about Factory Incident?

There are a lot of people who are big Government Issue fans and like Factory Incident as well. They might not like it as much as what Government Issue did when it was a lot

more noisy punk rock. A lot of different than what I'm doing now. They still respect what I'm doing and we just made a whole new circle of fans. I've made a whole new circle of fans from people who never really paid much attention to Government Issue and they don't really know much about Government Issue but they like the Factory Incident stuff. That's the way I would like it to be. I didn't want people to like it on the basis that they were Government Issue fans and they knew me from Government Issue. I went out of my way to not put the John Stabb connection on it. I just wanted John Schroeder and if people listened to it and pegged me, that's cool. If they just listened to it and liked the stuff then that's good. I just wanted to be part of a unit. I didn't want to be the main focus for everyone to concentrate on. Over time we've used the Government Issue connection. I was so opposed to using that but Carl said people will know me from Government Issue and if it helps us sell a few CDs, maybe it will turn people on to what we're doing.

It's a good marketing technique.

When we put out our three EP CD, he used it to sell our thing on EBay. It was like John Stabb from Government Issue's new band and if you buy Factory Incident, he'll sign however you want and he'll sell some Government Issue shirts with it. I've made some deals with Chaser Shirts out in California who wanted to make all these Government Issue T-shirt designs and they made a deal with me to put out T-shirts, hoodies, and caps. So 20 years after the fact I'm finally making a profit. It really seems ironic that we're actually getting the stuff out there when people at the time, I would see all the stuff from Minor Threat being bootlegged and I'd wonder when we were going to be bootlegged because I thought that was the highest form of compliment. You've finally made it when you're bootlegged. I've found the Government Issue bootlegs that have come out down the line. Give me a box of them. What was weird when we got the deal with Dr. Strange was Bill who runs the company wrote me and Tom. Tom was working out the whole deal and he was going to ask our old label if it was all right for him to re-release the stuff on The Complete History Volume One. We told him not to bother because they're weasels who ripped us off for years and they're still reprinting Government Issue stuff and we've never made a dime after the fact of getting \$5,000 for a three record contract and our 12 page rip-off standard rock contract. We got burned but not as bad as some people on major labels I've known. Gone from punk and done things in the rock and metal scene. There are way too many horror stories and I'm so glad we didn't get to that point. He said they'd sue him if he put it out. People have been telling me and others in the band for years that we really should sue them because they're still releasing the stuff and we've never made a dime out of it. I always felt that they'd just milk the lawsuit for years and we'd be drained dry because they have lawyers and we don't. We can't afford to do that whole process and we foolishly never went out of our way to do anything. Finally when it came to the point that we were going to put this stuff out again, Tom Lile whose brother in L.A. was a lawyer, decided to talk to his brother and get him to talk to them. He went and told them put up or shut up. What's going on? They told us to take all the stuff and they'd still put out all the old stuff in the warehouse. Now we own the rights to our name and all of our material and I never knew how good that would be. We were so foolish back in Government Issue. "All songs written by Government Issue." We never actually put songs like Lile, Schroeder. We were foolish to sign the contract and work with this

label that did absolutely nothing for us in the long run. They didn't really help us out much and just cheated us into the ground. Didn't make a cent from them. Dr. Strange has put out both volumes and the Strange line. Even though this DVD came out, Dr. Strange is still working out as we speak a full DVD collection of all the Government Issue shows and pieces, almost like our own documentary. There isn't any footage of us sitting down talking about the old days which I'd really like to do. This thing is supposed to come out on Dr. Strange as a full package and it will be more than just two concerts like MVD is doing. I even asked Dr. Strange if there would be a problem if I did the deal with MVD and he said as long as they buy his documentary and I said of course they will. I heard some great news from Bill that Lumberjack Distributing is working with them because Mortem Records folded and Lumberjack is practically in Best Buy. Now our stuff will be out there for more people to see as opposed to certain little chain record stores. I'm pretty happy with all that's going on. MVD has been really, really cool. They've constantly sent me all the press that comes out and reviews and they sent me some covers they wanted me to autograph. They were going to have radio contests where they'd have a little quiz or something for people to win these on the air. I actually got to come up with our own question. From the moment they wooed me, I felt really good. I knew bands like Husker Du years back who were being courted by major labels and for years they turned them down. They finally did it and regretted it. I tell kids that being signed is not the way to make money. It's nice that the recognition is there and there's some respect and the stuff is reissued again and we're actually making something off it as opposed to having it come out on the old label and not making any money.

Any other thoughts or comments?

I always wanted to do some acting and about a year ago my girlfriend signed me up on this local theater improv course and people thought I was good at it. Only recently a friend of mine who did a movie five years ago called *Wild Diner* actually got it out there and was pushing it. He did another movie now and wanted me to be a lead in it. I did all this filming recently and it's called *Date Number One*. It's definitely not my goal to be competition with Henry Rollins. I'm on his heels. I'm catching up with him. I'll be in every bad prison convict movie and every bodyguard role that I can think of. It if makes any money, fine. If it just gets out there, apparently he's got a 26 date tour already set up. It's coming out in the Fall. People can see about that online. They can see me dressed as a ninja. I play a guy that wears a ninja outfit and goes out on blind dates. There are three different stories on there. I started out with just a little cameo role as a bartender who may or may not be bisexual. I threw that in myself and I get to tell this guy in a punk band called The Punk Mariachi All Stars which would never wash in the D.C. scene, but I get to tell him things like "don't take this in a gay way but I think you're dreamy." It was great working with people who had acting accomplishments. I have a huge passion for film and I like to entertain people. That's my thing. As long as no one compares me to Henry Rollins.