

VINTAGE

FLIPPER



There's no reasonable explanation why **Flipper** can make what appears to be an ordinary group of shoppers pogo in public. Rest assured, the band can still do it. A crowd of more than 400 jammed the aisles of San Francisco's Amoeba Records in February, as the revered punk-rock survivors—now old enough to play on golf's senior tour—lit into a throbbing, 40-minute set that included chromosome-damaged, post-punk faves "Ha, Ha, Ha" and "Way Of The World" to celebrate the release of *Flipper Live* (Target-video77), a DVD of performances from 1980-81. At the set's conclusion, guitarist Ted Falconi, his cascading silver hair tied behind his back, was so locked into his instrument he remained onstage long after his bandmates departed.

Three hours earlier, original Flipper singer Bruce Loose and drummer Steve DePace, along with former Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic (now filling the shoes of Flipper bassist/vocalist Will Shatter, who died of a drug overdose in 1987), were downing a few brews at a grimy Haight Street bar before the in-store performance.

"When I first heard Flipper, I didn't know what to think," says Novoselic, who was turned on to the band by Melvins frontman Buzz Osborne. "He said, 'Listen to this,' like it was scripture. I listened a second time, and yeah, it was pretty out there. The third time, I was floored. It was utterly hypnotic. My life has been different ever since."

DePace, whose rhythmic rolling thunder stands up to comparisons with longtime John Coltrane drummer Elvin Jones, is aware that Falconi's steamroller guitar sound is Flipper's crucial element. In full flight, Falconi somehow resembles a guitar army. "No one plays like Ted," says DePace. "No one can even figure out what the hell he's doing. I don't even know what he's doing."

Flipper's chaotic howl, usually an acquired addiction, was not an easy sell when the band hit the road in the early '80s. "We played New Orleans at a place with a capacity of 215," laughs Loose. "We drove 195 of 'em out of there within 10 minutes."

Depicted in all its ragged glory on the cover of 1984's *Gone Fishin'*, the band's van was garishly inscribed with a catch phrase/warning: "Flipper suffered for their music. Now it's your turn." Says Loose, "The Hell's Angels in New York liked that catch phrase so much, they popped all our tires."

Unfathomably, Flipper was hired to play Studio 54 by the White Columns art gallery, which rented the famous Manhattan disco for the black-tie finale of a week-long 1983 music festival called Speed Trials. "We played one song before they realized we were the antithesis of everything they stood for," says DePace. "This big guy had his hand around Bruce's neck and the other fist cocked, and he said, 'If you play another note, I'm gonna take your head off.' Up until then, the staff was treating us like rock stars. We were thrown out the back door. Party over."

With a new Flipper album in the can produced by Seattle grunge-meister Jack Endino, Novoselic is starry-eyed about joining his one-time heroes. "I feel very privileged to play this music," he says.

Loose eyeballs the strapping, 6-foot-7-inch Novoselic. "I don't know," he wisecracks. "He's kinda big to fill Will's clothes." [Targetvideo77, www.targetvideo.blog-spot.com]

—Jud Cost



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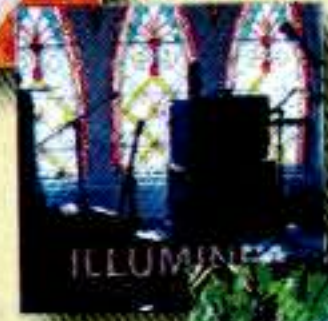
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