

Sex bomb baby, yeah!



Now that all the kids are doing the wang-dang-doodle to the recent tsunami wave of noise punk, I figured this would be as good a time as any to hip some of you young 'uns to one of the fiercest, noisiest, most dangerous and infuriating bands ever, Flipper.

In 1979, as punk rock's beats were getting faster and faster, making way for hardcore, these misanthropes brought their BPM down to a halting and agonizing thud. Flipper's "slo-fi" dirges were defined by the lead instrument, a plodding bass played by either Will Shatter or Bruce Loose—their riffs were usually comprised of four notes, but always pulsed and led the way with mind-numbing repetition. Guitarist Ted Falconi's discordant guitar squealed in the background with vicious six-string slashes while drummer Steve DePace tried to make sense of the whole mess and keep the train from careening off the tracks. Over the music would be Shatter or Loose's bored monotone, delivering dada lyrics.

Flipper were always about testing the patience of even their most ardent fans, and always felt more comfortable when the audience actually hated them. The more repellant the music, the more endeared their fanbase became. Their sense of nihilism also flew right in the face of the Lower East Side no-wavers like Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, 8-Eyed Spy and DNA, and Cleveland post-punkers like Pere Ubu and the Mirrors. Unlike the trust-fund art brats on the East Coast, Flipper lived at no fixed address and would shoplift for food. Not only did the band hate their audiences, but they could barely tolerate each other as well. Most telling would be when Shatter and Loose would invite the audience on stage to sing the lines they would be best remembered by, "Sex bomb baby, yeah!" while Falconi would sit at stage right, swatting audience members with a spike-festooned guitar headstock.



The new DVD *Flipper Live 1980-81* (Target/MVD) comes as nothing short of a revelation. Flipper's back catalogue has been sitting in limbo ever since Loose, strung out on heroin, broke into their former label's offices, stole the master tapes and signed over the rights to music mogul Rick Rubin for a pittance. Rubin has since been sitting on the tapes and plans no releases. This DVD, though, really brings classics like "Love Canal," "Life" and of course "Sex Bomb" to life in 5.1 Surround Sound, and transcends the studio versions with two concerts and one cable TV appearance.

Sadly, the band's nihilism caught up with them when Shatter died of an overdose in 1986—his replacement, John Dougherty, followed suit, dying of an overdose in 1992. The band have been laying low ever since, but will be playing a one-off show this week in San Francisco to celebrate the DVD release, and are putting the finishing touches on a new record with their current bass player, Nirvana's Krist Novoselic. Best of all, their former label Subterranean has been granted vinyl rights to their first two records, so expect releases of their classics, *Generic Flipper* and *Gone Fishing*, in the next couple of months. ■

FLIPPER SUFFERED FOR THEIR MUSIC, NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...
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