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... And much more!

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# Give Praise Records

## Label Spotlight



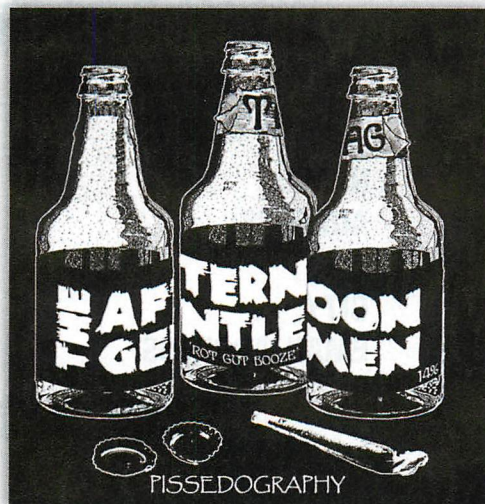
Interview with owner Paul Sunderland  
By Janelle Jones

I don't want to say I loved this conversation with Paul from Give Praise Records because he started the label by putting out cassettes and still is carrying out the practice (he confirms, "I have a cassette coming out, BLACK MARKET FETUS complete discography on cassette") but it helped. Still, he was totally "radical" to chat with, and who else would talk to me about putting out crucial 8-track tapes? ("You can put out an 8-track with no music on it and honestly, who's gonna call you on your bluff? No one even has the ability to play that!! As long as the picture on it is cool or it's a bright yellow.") Anyway, back to things you're probably more interested in, along with the HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH/TITANARUM split (discussed below) he's releasing in September, he's also putting out the FAILURE FACE discography and a few BRODY'S MILTIA records later this year.

### How did you come up with the idea to start this?

I basically needed something to do. I guess it started when I was 17—I'm 27 now so that was a while ago. I would bring records to shows from my friend Paul who was in the DUMPSTER JUNKIES and just sell records at the local shows. And then I jumped into it more seriously. [...] I had a record label called Skate Squad which was all cassettes. And there's really no local scene here, so basically I started talking to Max who runs 625 Records and he had sent me a whole bunch of tapes, I basically did tape trading with him. He sent me a tape

by this band called KILLED IN ACTION which was really good and I ended up becoming real good friends with Travis who sang in that band. He invited me to his house a few times and I went to shows with him in Philadelphia where he lives. I ended up re-releasing the cassette tape; I think it was a run of 65 or something real minimal. Then I said, "All right, the record label is going to be serious, let's do some vinyl." And he said, "Sure, why not." So I talked to Six Weeks Records because they had done records with KILLED IN ACTION and then finally I did that



and that was my second vinyl release. The real label stuff kinda started there, I guess.

**I saw you have a lot of vinyl releases. I know so many people want that instant gratification of downloading, do you find that sales for the physical copies have gone down? Do you release them both ways?**

I usually push my bands to do really good cover art and sometimes we do posters, stuff you can only get with the vinyl. As far as downloads go, I do downloads on occasion, usually I won't because still some of the bands are kinda weird about downloads; they don't like downloads. The bands I deal with kinda wanna stay away from the downloads and they just want the vinyl. But now I kinda talked a lot of them into just doing the downloads 'cause it's way easier to get the music out that way. More people will download it but maybe they'll also buy the vinyl too 'cause they'll get the poster or whatever. I have a mail order too and my CD sales are like zero. It's all vinyl, LPs and 7"s. No one buys CDs anymore. I have [CD] sales occasionally, I can't even give that stuff away. But people come to me for the fastcore and I definitely have a core group of people that will order every week. I put out so many releases, they're always getting the new stuff.

**I saw you have that split coming out soon. You wanna talk about that?**

Yes. The HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH one? That's actually a bigger band for me. Just recently, maybe two or three years ago, it started to be more of a household record label name I guess. I was doing a lot of really good bands, but a lot of smaller bands that maybe didn't tour constantly or that didn't have a lot of previous releases. So HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH is kind of a bigger one just because they've had releases on Sound Pollution, they played Speed Trials in California this past year. But actually it's a record that's been sitting around for a while 'cause that TITANARUM band has been defunct for about a year, so nobody really wanted to put it out. When I was starting to talk about putting it out they were still a band, and then they broke up and I was like, "I'll still put it out." And usually I don't even do LPs that much, I do 7"s 'cause with my bands it's fast music. You can write 20 songs and it'll only take up 5 minutes.

**Exactly! I always think of DRI, the Dirty Rotten EP...**

Yeah, it's true. These guys write songs, it takes them so long to fill up a single that, by the time they're writing an LP, it's 10 years later.

**When you started doing this seriously, were there any labels—well, you mentioned the one before with the tape trade, but were there any ones you tried to emulate as a model?**

625 definitely helped me out big time. He emailed me back and



forth, 'cause I'd emailed people who just never got back to me. I understand that, that's no big deal. But 625, he was right on top of it, he sent me packages of tapes for new bands to check out, kind of his demo overflow I guess. I really liked Six Weeks, I liked Slap-A-Ham, they're not even around anymore. That kind of power-violence, using the funny artwork and samples that are actually longer than the music.

**I also meant business-practice-wise. Or you probably weren't even thinking about that then and just wanted to get stuff out there.**

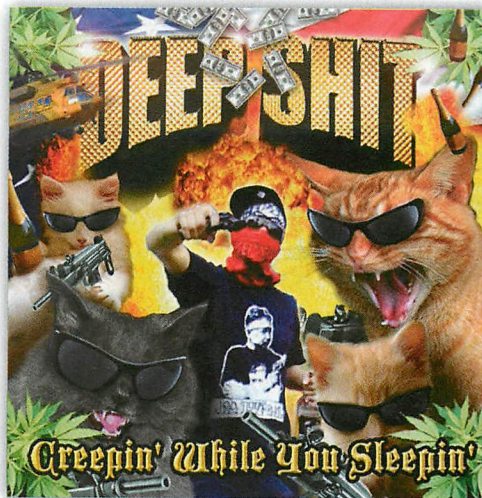
Yeah, I never thought about that at all. I have a fairly good day job, so basically I would take all of my money and put it into this record label. My paycheck would just be signed over to the pressing plant. And I never even really thought about money at all until maybe two or three years ago when you have to work with distributors. You don't really think [about that] when you're starting a label. "I'm gonna put out a few records here and there," but then blogs or whatever and distributors get in touch with you, people are asking why they can't go to the record store and get your music. So for that part of it, I just learned it and went. No one really knows when you ask people about that; it's all such a personal "just try it, see what works" type of thing. And then eventually it works. [Laughs]

**You mention about how your whole paycheck went into the pressing plant, I don't know if there's a difference between cost-wise now. I've heard some people say they gave up on vinyl 'cause it's pretty expensive.**

Yeah. It's real expensive. The cost of everything has gone so far up. I remember when my wholesale price was \$2 and even now it's going up 65 cents or a dollar, it makes a huge amount of difference to the end person but that could mean your label stays floating for a little while longer.

**Also, how'd you get into the mail order?**

Basically the only reason people would take my records when I first started is trading. That was it. No one would give me any money for my records. So it was either I'd have this pile of 500 records sitting around or I could get rid of them and get some more records or maybe sell those at shows or whatever. So that kinda blossomed from there. I can do this, I can sell



records, not just my music, I could sell other people's music. I guess if you're around long enough people will trust you with your records. [Laughs]

**About the label again, how do you decide which bands to add to the roster? Do you allow submissions?**

I used to go on tour with a few bands every once in a while. I went on tour with NERVOUS BREAKDOWN from Germany, IN DEFENCE a few times, I HATE THIS from PA and I'd see other bands at shows and I'd go up to them and say, "Hey, you guys are really good, do you wanna put out a record?" And give 'em a flyer. And then I haven't been on tour in a while, so it's kinda like I'll work with a band 'cause one of my friends will recommend them. I think the only band I've worked with that was based solely on a demo was NO MAN'S SLAVE. They sent me a tape demo and it was really good.

**So it is possible. [Laughs]**

A lot of people just don't send demo tapes anymore. They send CD-Rs or a package with a press release. It's kinda weird. I'd rather have a demo tape as opposed to a six-page essay why I should put it out. It is good too because you'll get press saying [whom] they toured with or bands they played shows with, which is cool. And that stuff sticks out 'cause you want bands to be touring and not non-active.

**How many people do you have working with you?**

Oh, it is just me.

I could totally tell you were writing the news updates 'cause I saw "radical" and I remember that in your email! That's your style.

I'm actually anal about how stuff runs, so I don't really know that I'd like someone to work with me. There are definitely days when it's humid and 85 degrees like it is today and packing a mail order is real brutal but I like to see what I'm sending out and I like to pack the records myself. When you screw up they look to you to fix it.

**I know you're behind every record you put out, but are there any in particular that you're really proud to have released?**

All the bands that I don't say are gonna hate me. [Laughs] The record I was most proud of—there's probably two of them: KILLED IN ACTION, just because I like that band so much. I must've listened to that demo three million times and then getting to do a record with them was really cool. It's one of those bands I really liked and constantly listened to myself. And the other one would probably be BRODY'S MILITIA, just because those guys, it's members of HELLNATION and HELLNATION is probably one of my top-five bands of all time. It wasn't even HELLNATION, but two members of HELLNATION. They'd broken up like two years after I'd started the label so to have something to do with these guys, on a personal level... You get personal with the bands you put out. You talk to them on the phone and stuff so it was really cool to do that. The artwork I'm most proud of was the DEEP SHIT/ CREEPIN' WHILE YOU SLEEPIN' EP. It's a cat with a machine gun and a collage of pot leaves, money, and fire and like chains in the background. DEEP SHIT is even in, I don't wanna say bling, but that gold-necklace-style and the center labels are ■



dice, so...

**Real gangsta right there. [Laughs]**

It's awesome. The left-coast hip-hop power-violence. That's the record that's gotten the most compliments about the artwork that I've ever done.

