

Rolling Stone

Dead Kennedys' East Bay Ray Returns With the Killer Smiles

Punk band guitarist also says he's open to a reunion with Jello Biafra

by: Greg Prato



Photo by Pixie Vision Productions

Although the [Dead Kennedys](#) have been back on the concert circuit for several years (with other singers taking the spot of Jello Biafra), the group hasn't issued a full-length album of new material since 1986's *Bedtime for Democracy*. But DK guitarist East Bay Ray's unmistakable six-string work will see the light of day again when his band, the Killer Smiles, issues *The Killer Smiles* on September 13th via MVD Audio.

First, though, he and the rest of the Dead Kennedys are contending with the unauthorized use of one of their classic songs, "Too Drunk Too Fuck." Nouvelle Vague's lounge version of the song was used in a European Heineken ad – and the band is none too pleased. "A friend of mine told me about it, because basically, the Dead Kennedys have never done a commercial," says Ray. "Our attorney has sent them a letter. We're asking for a public apology. It's shocking in this day and age that some corporate beer company would just take a song and not know that you have to get permission. We would not have given it."

Joining Ray in the new group are three members who have played in recent years with the Dead Kennedys – singer Skip McSkipster, bassist Greg Reeves and drummer Steve Wilson. "I really had a desire to do new songs," Ray tells *Rolling Stone*. "So [Skip] and I started writing, and they were coming out good. We decided to record them, and I knew Paul Leary from back in the day – the Dead Kennedys and the Butthole Surfers

used to play warehouses in Texas. Really hot nights. Paul and I stayed in touch, so I called him up, and he said, 'Send me some tracks,' and he ended up producing it."

Ray also says that fans of his earlier work should be able to connect the dots, musically. "It's got my guitar playing and my guitar sound. But the lyrics are different, because Skip has a different viewpoint on the world. In general, I'd say he's more 'personal politics' and more 'poetry,' rather than 'journalism' and 'regular politics.'" And it's no surprise that the band's name has a political bent – Ray explains that the band's name was partly inspired by the hypocrisy of politicians.

Would Ray, bassist Klaus Flouride and drummer DH Peligro ever consider reuniting with Biafra? "We would. Klaus, DH, and I have been playing together for years. We've offered it to him, and he's had people come talk to us. He's the 'crazy uncle' of the family."

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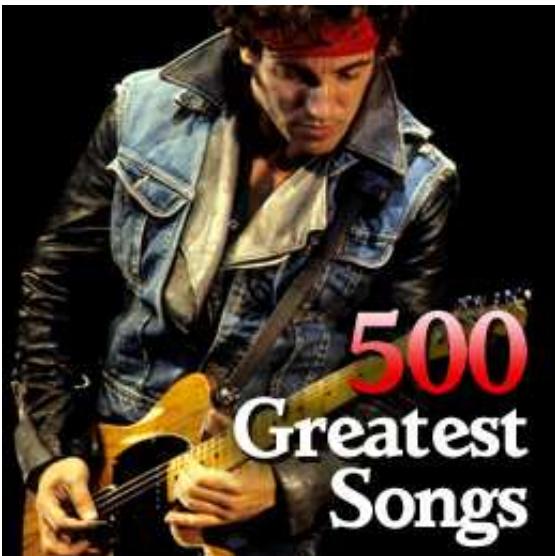
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