

The music industry has perpetrated so many hoaxes on the American record-buying public — not to mention, bilking consumers out of their hard-earned money — it's sometimes fun to watch the weasels get trapped by someone more cunning than they are. Jeanie Finlay's "The Great Hip Hop Hoax" describes how a pair of white Scottish rappers, known as the Proclaimers, reimagined themselves as the California hip-hop duo Silibil n' Brains. In doing so, they became a sensation in the London club scene and attracted the attention of Sony UK executives, searching high and low for the next Eminem and Beastie Boys. Billy Boyd and Gavin Bain would be handed a check for 250,000 pounds, which, of course, they eventually pissed away on the accoutrements of rock-'n'-roll fame. "The Great Hip Hop Hoax" is less a cautionary tale than a miniature portrait of a desperate industry in decline. In fact, if it weren't for a downward blip in business at Sony, during which the boys were dropped from the label, the hoax might have gone on for another three years. After breaking up for a while, Silibil n' Brains has recently released a pair of EPs and made its tres-cool T-shirts available on its website. — Gary Dretzka

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