

THE BLOOD BROTHERS

Jordan Blilie- vocals
Johnny Whitney – vocals
Cody Votolato- guitar
Morgan Henderson- bass
Mark Gajadhar- drums

The word punk has been thrown around more times than a musty sweatrag in a backstage dressing room. Now that you can get your cheek pierced at the local mall and Ramones patches are tame enough for purchase at your friendly neighborhood kitsch store, the original concept of the word is too often buried beneath targeted marketing schemes. The truly artistic rebels are right to be skeptical. So let's get back to the true meaning of the word, the original sense of a sound, an attitude, emanating from young, fiery counter-culturalists armed with instruments used for breaking ground, dropping stealth bombs of foundation-shattering songs that detonate in punk's commercial corpse, making you stand up and ask, "What the fuck is this?" and wanting more.

THE BLOOD BROTHERS are a punk band in the purest sense. The Seattle based five piece is punk in the way that only a band that changes their intricate rhythms every couple seconds, smashes beats over your head like a hailstorm of percussive shrapnel, and screams social critiques wrapped in post-modern images can be. They're punk in that they would rather bite the hand that feeds them than allow it to place any sort of leash around their creativity, working steadfastly on indie labels until a producer who was excited about their uncompromising ethic and unusual musical style, Ross Robinson, approached with the promise of allowing them to make music 100 percent their way. "I loved everything about them the first time I heard them," says Robinson, whose production credits include At the Drive In, Slipknot, and Limp Bizkit. "The beats were really cool, the singing was on fire, and the guitar and bass playing were just perfectly amazing. Everything about it just pressed my buttons."

And so now we bring you *Burn Piano Island, Burn*, due out March 18, 2003 on Robinson's ARTISTdirect Records imprint, I AM Recordings, the third full length from vocalists Jordan Blilie and Johnny Whitney, guitarist Cody Votolato, drummer Mark Gajadhar, and bassist Morgan Henderson. The album doesn't so much start as it flicks a lit match through a quick fuse of hot tempered, post-modern punk. Starting with the 37 second long "Guitar Army," *Burn* lives up to its name, leaving barely enough space to take a breath before splintering through multi-leveled layers of white noise, baroque atmospherics, duel vocal theatrics and mazes of angular guitar spasms while the bass and drums keep pulse with a darkly erratic heartbeat. It's a dense package, as each song moves swiftly through so many different time changes and proficient instrumental techniques you'll want to hit repeat just to make sure you get it all. It's not brain surgery, but it takes a commitment to breaking with tradition to make music this unusually intoxicating. Add to that chaotic combination flashes of acoustic guitar, vintage electric

pianos and a xylophone, and you have a band that's very uncomfortable treading ground that's been stomped one time too many.

"Whenever we go on tour, it always seems like we're the odd men out," says Whitney of his band's non-traditional sound. "When we went on the Oops! tour [with Lightning Bolt, the Locust, and Arab on Radar], we were the straightest band, but during this New York hardcore festival, we were obviously the weirdest band—and then on the Glassjaw tour, we were again the odd men out."

Although they may be more difficult to slot into a box than your typical, steroids-pumped hardcore act or three chord punks, The Blood Brothers aren't complaining. They've been building a steady underground following across the nation since forming in 1997, touring with the abovementioned acts as well as Pretty Girls Make Graves and others. Three years after becoming a band, The Blood Brothers birthed *This Adultery is Ripe* on Second Nature, an artfully vitriolic avant-hardcore catharsis, with brains as sharp as its claws. 2001 saw the follow up to that well-loved debut, *March on Electric Children*, a record about which the *Village Voice* enthusiastically begged, "If this is the sound of youth decaying, then stick a dead teenager in my ear" while *NME* called the record "Utterly deranged. But deeply, deeply compelling. And yeah, societal decay left its entrails all over *March*, as Blilie and Whitney speared false pretenses and the sickness inherent in using sexuality as an advertising tool.

Burn Piano Island, *Burn* suffers fools no less gladly, as again the vocal tagteam spews surreal punk poetry about "bulimic rainbows" ("Burn Piano Island, Burn"), millionaires eating their shadows ("Six Nightmares at the Pinball Masquerade") and bodies getting crucified across cacti where love once grew ("I Know Where the Canaries and the Crows Go"). "Every Breath is a Bomb," haunts with sing-song backing taunts before littering the lyrics with images of fake flowers, fake funerals, and rays of sunshine hiding "cancerous chimes," fading out with the twinkling of a Wurlitzer. Like the music that feeds and surrounds it, The Blood Brothers' narratives aren't about oppressive outpourings of contemptuous noise and narrow-minded, hateful rants—just listen to the gothically beautiful ending to "The Shame" to hear how they temper nefarious statements with ebullient instrumentals. Each track is a careful construction of art and intellect - damaged aggression, one fueled by energy, excitement, and a ferocious desire to tear down the settled, cobweb-sprouting pillars of both our musical and social existence. "In a way, this record made the longevity of the band so much longer," says Whitney, "because by writing songs like 'The Shame,' 'The Salesman, Denver Max,' and 'Every Breath is a Bomb,' it kind of became clear to everybody that we could write songs that are outside of our 'genre' and still have it sound like The Blood Brothers. Now there's even more opportunity to really diversify and not pigeonhole ourselves."

Live, The Blood Brothers are just as combustible and unpredictable, as the individual members become perfectly discordant parts, ramming into each other like a grand sonic car crash, engines revved and sparks flying, a chaotic reaction with methods to every move. "With a lot of our new stuff, pulling it off live will be more of a challenge because it's a more experimental," says Votolato.

Adds Henderson, “I think it will make it better because then it will make it more of a dynamic live show. Because so far all of our shows are just like, ‘Agggghh!’ the whole time, and with the new songs, we can play more of a diverse set. I’m actually excited for that.”

Diversity is an asset severely lacking in the mainstream’s disposable punk culture, but thanks to acts like The Blood Brothers, our culture’s dead ends are merely fodder for new material, as *Burn Piano Island*, *Burn* makes a funeral pyre out of the standard approach to modern punk.

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I AM Recordings
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