

ACID



BORN IN THE U.S. TO STAY

Usually whenever I think of acid, I think about some bubbling liquid that Dr. No used to dispose of his bumbling underlings or something that my friends used to take before a Black Sabbath concert in the late '70s. However, the band Acid is a completely different concoction. Eating its way straight out of the mind of Bobby Kennedy, *Acid* is an eye opening set of songs.

Strange, as I was looking up info for Bobby and the band I read a blurb that said Robert F Kennedy once allegedly said that he "feared his children would be blinded by an acid attack." Coincidence? Probably. But for those of those of you who now are confused and think the Bobby Kennedy I'm referring to is the brother of Teddy from good ole' Kennebunkport, please pay attention. Do not get distracted and somehow drive your girlfriend off a short bridge in a long, black car.

Bobby Kennedy hails from a long line of influential locals that were part of New Jersey's first wave of late-'70s, early-'80s punk rock. His band, Chronic Sick, went on to become one of Jersey's biggest and the band still commands cult-like respect and high prices for their 1982 release, *Cutest Band In Hardcore* vinyl, on sites like eBay. Kennedy was the darkly witted guitarist who is best known for his no holds barred approach, psychotic comedy and three-chord crunch, a trademark that he continues today.

After the explosive deterioration of Chronic Sick, Kennedy did what many in his position would do. He drifted

across the United States—winding up in that West Coast cesspool us humans call Los Angeles, and writing songs for commercials and movies. Kennedy scored a publishing deal with Arista in 1996 and ended up in Atlanta on Rowdy Records before moving on to writing for the silver screen. His compositions have been in movies such as *Sled* and *Zoolander* as well as TV shows such as *CSI*, *Law And Order* and *Sex And The City*. He inked a deal with Tom Hanks' label, Playtone Records, in 2000 and has remained a focal point on the TV writing circuit to this very day. He has also donned the producer's hat for Captain Sensible, The Damned and Jersey Shore blue-collar rockers The Easy Outs.

The overall feel of this self-titled disc is one of early-'80s punk, coated in Beatles sensibilities and hummable melodies. It reminds me of much of the early work of The Replacements, solo Lennon projects and '70s power pop sensation, The Records. Actually, while on the phone getting his info, Bobby told me he was going for a "Jesus And The Mary Chain meets Cheap Trick" feel, which actually makes sense to me. Ever the joker, he also deadpanned that they were really trying for that Damned Yankees vibe. All kidding aside, *Acid* has dissolved the flash and trash, getting right down to the bone of this no-nonsense CD.

"Dead" blasts out of the speakers with the melodic grace of a horde of wasps, lulling you in gritty undertones, while guitars buzz and explode with countermeasure tact.

Kennedy's skill at writing shows in his part choices. Guitars run diagonally to vocal melodies while bass and drums hold down the reality and thunder of this dirty, pop tune. "Dead" will also be the first song to have a video (out now) and will feature performance and studio edits.

"Nothing For Free" features bombastic, harmonized guitars grinding over sugar sweet melodies and Lennon-esque vocals. Think "I Am The Walrus" meets "Left Of The Dial" by the Replacements and you are all set.

More muscle-coated rock and roll flexing comes with the song "Jabberjaw." Featuring psychedelic melodies that wind around fuzz-face guitars and chest-thumping drums, Kennedy and crew show their late-'70s Zander and Nielsen style well. There is no listing on the disc of who plays what but I think I can hear the heavy, low down sound of Frankenstein 3000 axe man Keith Roth in the rhythm mix here. This should be one of the top contenders on the disc as far as airplay.

Kennedy continues his poppy punk fest of feel good meets the dark side with "Life Drags On," a lithium powered daymare of love gone to shit that features the great line, "When I see your face, I wanna leave the human race. Tell me what it's gonna take to keep from killing you. When I hear your voice it doesn't leave that much choice, jump in front of a moving train is all I wanna do." What else could I possibly say?

"Sheila" warbles out of the speakers

with deep, reverb and tremolo drenched electrics. The band kicks in with Plimsouls abandon, with Kennedy playing the role of a suicide prevention gatekeeper as he sings, "put that gun away, put that gun away, you drama queen. Put that noose away, put that noose away, you don't swing." He sums up his feeling for Sheila with, "What I like about you is you're still around." One of my favorite songs on the disc, Kennedy is a talented writer that can show the lighter side of everything horrible and he does it with a lethal tongue-in-cheek style, a radical, compositional imagination and musicians that never miss the mark when aiming for the right feel.

"I'm So Gone" is another highlight of the disc with its feel good, sunshine lyrics. Slide guitars à la Harrison on *Instant Karma* lead into Beatles sing-along choral melody supported by open chord voicing's and drums machines. Acoustic guitars support the country-tinged lead guitar work of Kennedy, who, besides Rick Nielsen, is probably the best player in this crossover game. Once again, I am not sure who is playing what on the CD but people like Clint Gascoyne (FS3K) Phil Caivano (Monster Magnet) and Greg Macolino (Chronic Sick) are all over this disc as performers, producers and other underhanded henchmen.

Other mentionable tracks are the upbeat vibe of "She's My Lady," a clever pop ditty combining the anathematic appeal of Willie Nile's "One Guitar," the melodic romp of the Beach Boys "Sloop John B," and the loving lament of "Used To Love Her" by Guns N' Roses. Wrap this entire song in a big rubber souled ball and toss it in the hoop.

"Wish I Had You" is yet another song that combines the pop sensibilities of a Paul Westerberg with the tonality of The Beatles and the wit of Loudon Wainwright III. Guitars rip over the top of solid drum work courtesy of Jon Kleinman. The only thing missing here is go-go girls in cages. Think The Knack in skinny neckties and Rickenbacker's and you would be pretty close to the money. Great pop song filled with contemporary production.

Acid is a first class offering from Kennedy and the most targeted I have seen in several years. *Acid* is definitely something major labels should be stopping to listen to as they fast-forward through this year's batch of Rihanna and Lady Gaga clones. The dark, Lennon-ish rebel vibe is some of the greatest power pop/punk out there today and besides the fact that I did not play on it, there is nothing to hate about it whatsoever. For further information about *Acid*, head on over to Main Man Records (mainmanrecords.com) and start asking questions.