

non-stop

BANTER



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Three
Johns

Charlie Pickett

Blatent Dissent

Recreational Bones



Charlie Pickett Calling

Interview by Mary
Photos by JR

If you haven't heard of Charlie Pickett, you will. A recent critique from some competition (which shall remain nameless) surmises that Charlie has the best rock and roll band in America. Oh, and Gerard likes 'em, too.

Charlie has many claims to fame, brushes with greatness, if you will. His most recent is his album, *Route 33* on Twin/Tone, with a couple extra musicians (in addition to his own outstanding band) that earned him at least one writer's embellishment on David Letterman. I chatted with Charlie at Gaspars and caught his show...

Non*Stop Banter: I've been listening to your album and like it a lot. How are things working with Twin/Tone?

Charlie: They're great. They constantly push your record and have sympathy for the artist. They allow total freedom--which is the key to making good music.

NSB: So do you live in Minneapolis?

Charlie: Yeah, well I do most of the time when I'm not in Miami.

NSB: So you are from Miami?

Charlie: I've lived there since I was two. *Route 33* is in Meigs County, Ohio ("Meigs County" is a song on Charlie's LP), which is where I was born. *Route 33* runs straight thru.

NSB: What is the Miami scene like?

Charlie: Well, I've got this to say for Miami: in the early eighties it nurtured and made us a band. The really interesting thing is that when the scene first started down there it was 2/3 girls, which is a rarity. But it was great. Girls are so much fun to play for. I mean when you play for guys, they just stand there with a beer and cigarette, and all you can do for them is beat the guitar to death. But playing for girls wakes you up and you realize that you just can't stand there and bash the guitar, it's stupid. Girls dance and have fun, which makes playing that much better.

NSB: What about your new record?

Charlie: Well, I'd like people to know that I'm not a recording person. I first started out to make a *Let It Bleed*...ya know, real powerful. But after a few weeks, it just wasn't working out. I'm a guitar player and I really like the first four cuts on the album the best.

NSB: I hear lots of influence, all kinds of things going on in your music. What would you say?

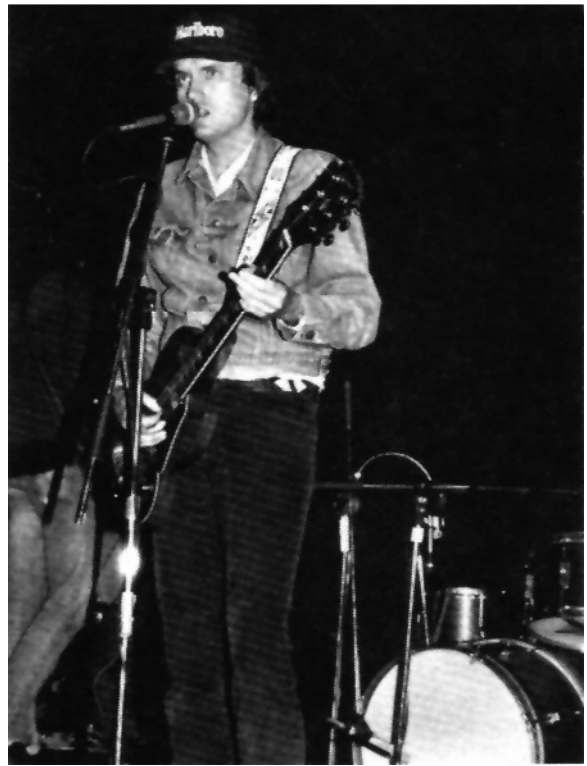
Charlie: Well, I don't ever want people to make comparisons like we are "little league Gun Club." And I think that Jeffrey Lee & Gun Club did more for new music in the early eighties than any other band.

NSB: I couldn't agree with you more, yet I think your music stands on its own two feet.

Charlie: Both of us started out at the same time. We were doing similar things and we were doing some completely different things, but we were in Miami, and Gun Club was in L.A.

NSB: So the scene thing in Miami didn't help?

Charlie: No, it first started out with 40 people, then over two years it grew to about 135, and now it's pretty much dead. Miami is demographics. It's mostly blacks, hispanics, and old people who don't really get off on new rock.



NSB: Jim Duckworth (formerly of Gun Club) plays on your album...

Charlie: We opened up for Gun Club in Miami, and Jeffrey Lee and a couple of guys from our band went out. So I just started jamming with Jim and Patti Morrison--who is this really cool Catholic-type girl. Then when I got ready to make the record, I called Jim and he said that he'd love to play on it. He hasn't done that much since the break-up.

NSB: O.K., but how did you get Maureen Tucker on this album too?

Charlie: Well, after Maureen left the Velvets, she moved to Phoenix. She's married and has five kids. Anyway, now she lives in Douglas, Georgia. But her oldest daughter was visiting in Phoenix one night when we were playing there, and we were opening for two hardcore bands. So, we were up there playing (pause) now some hardcore people just...some hardcore bands are o.k. But anyway, I thought I'd really let 'em have it, so I ripped into ten minutes of "Waiting For My Man" and Maureen's daughter was there and told her about. So I called her up and asked her to play on the album, and she said "sure" because she only does occasional session work now.

A strange set of circumstances maybe, but if you knew Charlie Pickett you probably wouldn't be surprised. He plays the kind of rock and roll you find in smoke-filled dives that make you sweat from just standin' there (which wouldn't be for long 'cause you'd be dancin' within a couple beers). Even if Charlie never makes it to Late Night with you-know-who, he's one heck of a guitar player and the personnel on his record obviously reflects that.

By the way, Charlie started his set off with a cover of "96 Tears," and maybe, if he called? "Cause he's thinking of this next album..."