

PEOPLE ARE STARVING.....

.....but at least we have THE EAT

THE EDDIE O'BRIEN INTERVIEW BY FISH

FISH: Where do you come from? Let's deal with the hero's period, civilization and society. Give us the "unsummed whole" as Sartre puts it.

EDDIE: On Long Island, New York. To talk seriously for a moment, when you talk to people like Debbie Rage they all say "aw, Long Island is dead and full of pussy fags." But it's not a cultural wasteland and it's not a bad place. There were a lot of bands from the Island during my teen years. Blue Oyster Cult, Vanilla Fudge, Young Rascals, The Hassles and Leslie West had his band Mountain, but he was in the Vagrants first. It was mostly all Jewish and Italian guys in the bands. All the music was either psychedelic or white rhythm and blues. Where I lived in Long Island the 50's took a long time to go away. The guys all wore pompadour hair and pointy shoes right up until '67 and then they all became hippies. I was as much of a hippie at 14 as you could get; but I loved pointy shoes. My mother wouldn't let the O'Brien boys have them so I'd hide 'em in my room and throw them out the window so I could sneak and wear them to school.

FISH : Why does your parody of the local trendies work? You make obvious observations and the crowd feeds on it. Some entertainers, Charlie Pickett springs to mind, circumvent this as though they were afraid of the alienation.

EDDIE: Maybe it's that all the guys in the band are Frank Zappa fans. We emulate him to a degree. We're certainly not above our audience; making fun of them is making fun of ourselves. We are, after all, even stupider than they are. Besides, everyone out there knows I'm such a nice guy.

FISH : Tell me where you want to go with your music?

EDDIE: What do you mean?!? I don't think we're gonna make it. If I could just have a weekend following and play steady, I'd be ecstatic! We just plan to keep slugging away, really. During the Cichlid period all the bands thought they were gonna make it, you know. They all used to talk about it. Sure, we would like to quit our jobs, though. Honestly, I'm not that good of a musician to strike off on my own. I really just want to make jokes and have fun and play with the Eat. We're a real group, not a super-star collaboration. Tell them I use Fender strings, heavy gauge at the bottom. No, really I use Fender 150 gauge, not the heavy gauge at the bottom; but fuck 'em, let them buy heavy gauge!

FISH: Micheal, (Ed's brother) is, speculatively, one of the great lyricists. What's he like? Any neuroses? Co-writing songs?

EDDIE: If there wasn't any Micheal, there wouldn't be any EAT. When I was first playing in bar bands down here and I bought this house, Mike was the prime motivator. He wrote the songs, he'd get us all together for practice. I can't discuss Mike's neuroses in print cause I did that once and he got mad. He's adjusted quite well, actually. He's the Brian Wilson of the EAT group.

FISH: Two years ago you were fending off questions about any possible political stand the Eat, as a unit or seperately, might have. Why?

EDDIE: I don't like to be tied down or put in a corner as far as politics go. People and groups such as Bob Dylan or the Clash have always ended up eating their words or sounding pretentious. The Eat are basically nihilists but we make fun of everything. Mainly we're a shitty-ass rock and roll band.

FISH: The Eat never say anything about women (!) per se. Catholic Love is an intimate pledge to the very strong woman in your life (Pepe O'B). Although you apologize ("through my fault..") it's really more of a rock-love-anthem. Whew! How did you pull that off? And what about women in rock and women, period?

EDDIE: Do we have to go back to women in every one of these goddamned interviews?! But, ahh, hardly anybody got the meaning of that song. Micheal and you obviously did. When we first played with the Cichlids, they had a song called "Jewish Girls" and they thought mine was a rebuttal, if you will. A lot of people just figured I was railing on about Catholicism but, yeah, it's really a pop love song. If my songs are obscure, even I don't understand some of Micheal's. About women, what about 'em? What can I say? I like them. I always encourage Pepe, like with Smegma and, now, the Smears. I don't really like the Fre-tenders or Siouxsie and the Banshees. Grace Slick was OK. I always thought Joni Mitchell was a really great artist, and that Exene from X is pretty good.

FISH: The Eat have always been such a cohesive unit; did Glen Newlands leaving cause any doubt as to continuing? How is Ken Lindahl working? Be brutal.



AMERICA'S CHOICE! L-R Eddie, Michael, Kenny, & Chris.

EDDIE: Yeah, Glen's leaving was real bad. We were the same four guys right from the start. Glen took care of a lot of band shit that we gotta cope with now. I remember when that Tight Squeeze club was booking bands, me and Glen went down there and Robert Mascaro was sitting at the bar having a drink. Glen just spoke right up and said we were the Eat, a punk band, and the manager thought we were the Nervous Eaters! He took care of a lot of the business and booking. But, fuck him, he left. Kenny was an old friend and we feel he's like us in most ways. We are bufoons and he's a bufoon and certainly he's not conservative and above bufoonery. Any guy who likes pro-wrestling and the Beverly Hillbillies is OK with us.

FISH: Rock and roll is the blood of your heart. How do you infuse so much humor into it though? ie. The fabulous fake national tour, the fabled fake record label? Most musicians tend to treat the art like some fragile holy cow.

EDDIE: Yeah. So? In this group humor is the most important thing. Look at this guitar; look at the funny shape and all the silly shit pasted to it. It makes a point of not being reverential. Is this a guitar Mahavishnu John McLaughlin would play?!? No. Maybe that's why I don't have that many favorite women in rock, because there are no funny ones. Smegma was funny. Different. Shit, I don't know. Humor is everything.

FISH: The future of rock in South Florida? Keep it short - relocation to L.A. or New York? Stay, and keep banging away at club doors? Mike, Chris and Ken?

EDDIE: How can we go anywhere? Be reasonable. You know what we have, jobs and homes. We have roots in this community. The Screaming Sneakers can go fuck themselves. We're all 28 or thereabouts. Miami is my home and home to all of us, for that matter. There's work here.

FISH: All time favorite bands? Be daring. And what caught your ear about "punk" enough to make the transition? What Transition? Was there one?

EDDIE: Nah, not that much. The stuff we play in the Eat was influenced a little by punk. To me punk is basically 50's garage music and that's what we play anyway. I think it helped a lot of bands come out of the closet. My favorite bands? The Beach Boys. The Burrito Brothers. The Band. Wait a minute, those all start with "B". OK, the Temptations, Commander Cody and Phil Ochs. Phil wasn't a band but he was great.

FISH: Why play with Charlie Pickett? Did you learn anything?

EDDIE: Mostly because Charlie asked me to play bass. I learned that if you just play bass you can get drunk, you don't have to rap to the audience or sing lead. Oh, and you can piss off the side of the stage and nobody notices. I stopped playing with Charlie because we disagree violently. He's very opinionated so there are very few shades of grey with him. Me, I'm a liberal, avant garde artist. As nice as Charlie is, it boils down to Charlie the immovable force, versus me, the irresistible asshole. You

want the real reason? It was just too difficult playing in two bands at the same time.

FISH: Feuds, farts and fads. Who's your pick of the local bands? Are the Essentials, essential? Is Charlie Pickett real?

EDDIE: To be perfectly honest with you , any band doing original songs with the right haircuts - I like. As long as they are as unlike Freewheel as they can be. I like listening to Charlie Pickett best. I'm tired of the Essentials getting kicked around. Walter CZ writes some damn good songs.

FISH: O.K. The obligatory football question.

EDDIE: There is only one team. The Dolphins. I like David Woodley and A.J. because they are young guys. Woodley has his arm and drives a Trans Am. A.J. has humor in his defensive play.

FISH: Are you afraid of the future? You rock and roll like a mother-fucker; does the implication "grand ole man of South Florida rock" put you off?

EDDIE: No. God, that's flattering as hell. Scot the Jew came up to me and said he liked to hang out with me cause it makes him feel young. What about the future? I got a job! The Eat? We got a gig, December 11/12 at the Edge in West Palm. Maybe even a New Years gig. It's the blimp, Frank, the blimp. In the gutter and a bottle of wine. We also have an LP coming out in the spring. It will probably never come out on Giggling Hitler records, its over-due by a year, but it will be out in the Spring. It's gonna make everyone jealous.

FISH: Jealous? You, Eddie?

EDDIE: I dnn't know if Charlie is being honest when he says he doesn't get jealous, but he's been saying it for so long, I guess it's honest. Everytime I see a group up on stage, having a good time and doing well, I think "That should be me!" I love it. That's all I ever wanted. That, and I like a laugh. I'm gonna end with that. I like a laugh!

L to R:

Father Eddie
& Michael



Photos:
Don Schrager

