



The Essentials were born out of necessity. Walter Cz wrote a song, "Videobeam", and needed a band to play it. He placed an ad in Rag magazine. Phil Stingray and Lois Lane answered. Walter had been strumming guitar in his room for quite awhile and had developed a thrash-bash style of rhythm guitar. Phil provided the melody line on lead guitar, while Lois picked up the bass to fill in the bottom. Finding a steady drummer proved to be a problem. Talented drummer John Galway came to their rescue, playing with them whenever they played a gig.

In October 1980, Pete Moss saw them perform at the Open Books and Records' "Three Hours of Fun, Sun, and Music" concert at Progresso Plaza. He loved them and began badgering Walter to let him join as drummer. Walter was put off by this long-haired hippie, but was willing to give a listen to his drumming skills. Pete was soon in, but the long hair had to go. On March 12, 1981, the newly streamlined Essentials (now a trio, Phil having left to form his own band) debuted at the Balkan Rock Club. To celebrate his first public gig with the band, Pete had gone to a standard barber shop and for \$3.50 joined the ranks of clean cut Americans. Walter sighed with relief.

Lois stayed in the band for over a year, finally leaving to pursue a managerial position with McDonald's. Steve Anthony (ex-RAF) filled in as bass player for awhile, but he was never committed to the band. He did record with Walter and Pete on their ep Fast Music in a Slow Town and sang lead on "Johnny", an RAF tune. Steve left soon after the recording was finished.

In September 1982, Walter and Pete heard Henry Sarria at a Sync studio party. They liked what they heard and saw and asked him to join them. He did, bringing new life to the band. With Henry's considerable song writing and bass playing talents, the Essentials blossomed.

Walter Cz describes himself as "an incredible human being and all around nice guy. I play guitar. I'm the blond one, the vaguely fatherish figure since I started the band. The name Essentials reflects the band. The music is supposed to be the bare elements of what you need to have a band make rock and roll, nothing more, nothing less." His musical influences include the Beatles, who, and Credence Clearwater Revival (which he listened to constantly for the first six years of his life.) "The first musical experience I really remember having other than listening to the Monkees on television was when a friend and I went to see Let It Be with the Beatles. I got a real kick out of watching them play and argue and fight with each other." Walter readily acknowledges the Jam as the group's role model. "The first punk bands I found were Patti Smith, Elvis Costello and the Jam. It's not that the Jam were much better than either of those two, it's just that they seemed to strike something in me that I could identify with." Walter has written most of the Essentials' songs, concentrating on themes of love, alienation, and modern technology. His style of guitar playing is basic power strumming; his right hand is a blur when he plays on stage. Walter has another outlet for his creativity: art. He's made ads for Open Books and Records, Open Records, and Safety Net Records. He's designed the covers of singles and albums for many south Florida bands, including: the Wrap, the Eat, Charlie Pickett and the Eggs, The Land That Time Forgot (the Florida compilation lp) and his own ep Fast Music in a Slow Town. He is also an accomplished cartoonist. His drawings



The Essentials article and interview by Leslie Wimmer  
"Three guys who are mod as hell and aren't going to take it anymore" Bill Ashton, Essential spokesman

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are simple and show a sharp wit and compassion for the human experience. Walter has drawn cartoons for Mouth of the Rat and Surburban Relapse, including two covers for the latter.

Pete Moss ("son" of Eric Moss, host of the late Radio Free Living Room) is the hardest working member of the Essentials, in and out of the group. Drummers always seem to sweat the most. His bread winning job is as a janitor, cleaning up after rich messy people. As a drummer, he's played in many south Florida bands (several at the same time) including: Stonehenge, Hypnosis, Stormbringer, Chaos (now F), Essentials, Spanish Dogs, Violent Love and the Dead Whores, Cult Heros, the Bobs (for one gig), the Eat (did a soundcheck), Trash, and Gay Cowboys in Bondage. He auditioned for the Cichlids (no go) and is frustrated because he's been turned down everytime he's asked Charlie Pickett to let him jam with the Eggs. Pete tries to keep his drumsticks into as many interesting projects as possible. He explains that he started playing drums "because I wanted to make a lot of noise. When I was five, my father played in a marching band for a volunteer fire department in Huntington, Long Island. He'd leave his drums sitting out. At the time the only two records I had were 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand' and 'Wipeout'. I figured I could play 'Wipeout', so I sat down and started to play. I've taught myself ever since. I took lessons for three months, but I knew more than the teacher, so I quit. I've learned by rehearsing, playing with records, and playing with bands. I have the worse unknown brand of drums which I bought used. I once kicked them a little too hard and they ended up in a friend's swimming pool!" Pete is the most knowledgeable musician of the group. He plays many different instruments and is not limited by any particular style, though he does lean towards humorous pop. He writes songs occasionally. He and Walter wrote "Electrical Shock", their big underground hit. A true child of the 60's T.V. generation, he cites drummers Judhead Jones of the Archies, Chris Partridge of the Partridge Family, and Mickey Dolez of the Monkees as his major influences.

Henry Sarria ("rhymes with diarrhea") is the new member of the Essentials. He plays bass. He used to use Fenders, but found they broke too easily when he'd throw them across the stage (youthful enthusiasm). So now he uses a generic Japanese brand called Palmer. They aren't as expensive to replace. Henry started playing guitar when he was nine. By the time he was about 16, between skateboarding, motocross, soccer, and fist fighting, he had broken his right hand six times and his left once. So he picked up the less intricate bass (only four strings to deal with). At the same time he played French horn and trumpet in his high school band. He was pleased to read in an informative interview that his hero, John Entwistle also played French horn. "Now if I could only play bass like him!" Henry sighed. "The first song I ever got turned onto was 'My Generation'; it started it all for me. Then came 'I Can't Expalin' and 'The Kids Are All Right', you know, early Who, then later the early Kinks. In '67 I listened to the Velvet Underground and the Stooges. Then in '77 I listened to the standard punk collection of Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks, etc. I also enjoyed Led Zeppelin's first two albums. But then they did 'Stairway to Heaven'. I consider that to be the burned-out national anthem!" Henry's major contribution to the band is his prolific song writing ability. He brings Walter and Pete three or four songs a week, which they all then distill into one good one. Henry fits in well; holding his own by throwing his contribution of terrible (but funny) puns and one liners into the ever bubbling stew of Essential humor.

The Essentials don't neatly fit into any one particular musical category. Starting out as Jam imitators they were considered slightly punk, mostly mod, and just about always pop. Hardcore

seems to be the rage in the American underground these days and since the Essentials don't readily fit the hardcore stereotype they've found it hard to get their ep distributed, even by Rough Trade, usually the champion of the do-it-yourselfers.

Walter's a bit frustrated. "There are a lot of half-assed hardcore bands that will make it just because they are hardcore and they have that sound which is easy to imitate, even if they add no substance to it. Meanwhile we knock ourselves out trying to create something that is at least a little challenging. We get pushed aside 'cause we aren't hardcore enough and because we're not electronic, we aren't played on the radio. There's no doubt in my mind that there's a lot of good hardcore, but say out of a thousand bands 100 are great and the other 900 are absolute shiteheads just imitating each other. I've heard some records by some popular hardcore bands that had some decent lyrics, but obviously didn't give a shit about what they put down on vinyl. The drummer was fucked up and the guitars were out of tune. I guess this is an ethnic unto itself, but I don't understand it. I think you've got to be tight to play music."

The Essentials are moving to Los Angeles in June. They hope to find a receptive audience. As Walter puts it "Maybe if they love us in L.A., Miami will remember us." They hope for fame and fortune and airplay for their ep. They'll settle for a comfortable living from their music, meeting a lot of new people, and finally seeing the Minutemen, Social Distortion, Rain Parade, and other bands that will probably never make it to south Florida. Bill Ashton, the fourth Essential and Safety Net Records executive, is also relocating to L.A. He points out that "the Essentials will be the first band ever to go from Hollywood to Hollywood."

So catch them soon, because soon they'll be gone.

If you have trouble finding the Essentials ep, send \$2.75 (and your return address!) to Safety Net Records P.O. Box 4546 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33338.



LESLIE WINNER