

The Wacky Hi-Jinks of Adrenalin O.D.
By Jim Testa (editor Jersey Beat Magazine)

Just because Adrenalin O.D. were funny, it was always too easy to pass them off as a joke. The fact that much of the hardcore nation discovered them with the novelty tune “Paul’s Not Home” from ROIR’s breakthrough “New York Thrash” compilation cassette (yes cassette) in 1981 didn’t help. The song stands alongside Wire’s “12XU” and anything you’d care to name by Minor Threat as a masterpiece of lyrical economy. But more than anything else, it makes you laugh.

And that is something A.O.D. could do better than anyone. Black Flag had their goofy moments, Jello Biafra had trenchant wit, but A.O.D. were laugh out loud, Don Rickles, Rodney Dangerfield, piss your pants funny. Much of that humor came in the band’s between song banter (drummer Dave Scott would have enjoyed a long rich career as a baggy-pants Borscht Belt comic if he had been born a few generations earlier, and singer Paul Richard could usually match him quip for quip.) So yeah, they were funny. Which is why, in the annals of “American Hardcore” (and by the way fuck you Steven Blush), they were never really given anywhere near the credit they deserve for their politics, their social commentary, or the impact they had on the hardcore scene.

Hopefully this reissue of the band’s first full-length will go a long way toward correcting that injustice. Adrenalin O.D. was more than just faster and louder than everyone else. There was an underlying melody to their songs missing from most of the hardcore bands of the day, and at a time when the face of hardcore was bald angry city boys with clenched fists, A.O.D. proudly flew the flag of suburbia, influencing a generation of punks to come, from Chicago’s Screeching Weasel, to San Francisco’s NOFX, to Jersey’s Bouncing Souls and Lifetime, to Ween and the army of punk, metal, and art rock bands that wound up on A.O.D.’s label Buy Our Records. Adrenalin O.D. not only were a big influence on dozens of New Jersey bands, they would lend themselves out to other groups in need of a guitarist, drummer or singer to enable the growth of the Jersey scene. There was even a subculture of assorted A.O.D. spin-off bands that included Deathrage, The Fart Heads, Fake Ray Millan Head, The Sophisticatos, and Priapism. They would take the DIY approach to new heights by doing their first national tour in Paul Richard’s Chevy Nova, borrowing equipment from the opening bands.

The decaying factory towns of their Northern New Jersey boyhood became the backdrop for songs that mixed satire with youthful disillusionment and cynicism; a theme that would be attacked throughout their material. Targets of their fierce wit would include jocks, yuppies, status symbols, sports cars, burnouts at the local gas station and even Mr. Rogers.

This special double disc reissue includes some extra goodies including their legendary debut ep “Let’s Barbeque” (recorded live in the studio in one 15 minute take), their first live session on WFMU’s legendary Pat Duncan show, live tracks from City Gardens, as well as some impossible to find compilation tracks. There are more than a few laughs to be had on this treasure trove of stuff too.

Yeah, those guys had some pretty good jokes. But give a listen- a really good listen- and you’ll find there’s really a lot more to A.O.D. than wacky hi-jinks.