

Little girls love Boogie Boy. They think he's 'cute'. The notion provokes hoots of laughter from Gerry Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo.

"Yes, a full-grown adult male in a rubber baby head is definitely cute in this world," says Casale. "He's the kind of infantile spirit of de-evolution. He's the big baby that's in us all."

But not everyone is so amused by Boogie Boy.

"Did you know that the video of 'Satisfaction' actually got banned in a couple of countries, because there was an adult man in a rubber baby's mask sticking a fork in a toaster?" says Mothersbaugh.

"They said it was a bad influence to show children other children shocking themselves," laughs Casale. "Something about hazardous behaviour."

It seems it doesn't matter what you say or do, someone will object. Devo take it all in their stride, because their aim, through their music, is to shock people. The message may be wrapped up in their sardonic brand of humour, but it's there all the same.

Devo are Middle Americans, taking a swipe at Middle



## A BIG HHHULLO TO THE PEOPLE AT ...

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American values. Patriotism, militarism, evangelism, chauvinism, all the things that go to make a country great. Knocking such things is almost subversive. Do Devo see themselves that way?

"We'd be lucky if we were subversive," says Casale. "That would be a compliment."

'Whip It', while being one giant pun, was also taken the wrong way by many people. The impression can't have been helped by the video of Mothersbaugh wielding a bullwhip and stripping off a lady's clothes.

"We owe it to Thomas Pynchon (bizarre novelist)," says Casale. "He was the influence on that one. In many of his books, but especially in *Gravity's Rainbow*, there's limerick after limerick of amazing wit concerning people's basic myths and fears and hangups. 'Whip It' sounds just like a Thomas Pynchon lyric, like one great big sendup of the self-help, you-can-do-it philosophy."

It's doubtful whether many Devo fans fully understand the concept of de-evolution. To trace its origins, you have to go back to the birthplace of Devo. Akron, Ohio.

"Life in Akron, as we knew it, is quite different from anyone's experience around here, I'm sure," says Casale. "It's an industrial community, a middle-sized city, with all the typical problems of American culture, plus being ugly and polluted. I think that being surrounded with that kind of mental, cultural wasteland certainly affected us as we grew up."

"Even though there are universals in that in the human experience, our particular one was intensified by this kind of urban zombieism. It had all the problems of a large cultural centre like New York city or something, without having any of the variety or freedom. It's a very repressive, very fundamentalist religious community, everything is great, and there were no avenues for expression."

"This de-evolution thing came from applying ideas and concepts that are in literature, in dance, in art, to our particular situation in Akron. We saw humans as the only ugly thing in the landscape, and we called what we saw de-evolution."

"We saw humans, rather than being the centre of the universe and the highpoint of evolution, as probably the only thing not in total harmony with the environment, and in fact becoming more and more dependent on things outside of themselves, to the point where this de-evolution process was taking place. Unwinding, going down. In other words, it's a cyclical thing. We saw things as falling apart, degenerating, entropy taking over. Things de-evolving to their similar, simplistic state."

"That leads to the breakdown of an organism in the environment. He becomes less and less whole, less and less integrated. More and more fragmented and specific, to the point where conceptual ability is lost, social ability is lost."

Personal initiative too?

"Sure. That dissonance is at the heart of Devo's kind of ironic humour, because the humanoid always projects outside of himself, he created this thing that he now blames for his demise, and you must see a sense of humour in that."

Whew! Heavy stuff. Casale is obviously used to explaining the method behind the madness. Most people just know Devo for their applied lunacy and silly clothes. But they too have their purpose.

"Everyone wears uniform," says Casale. "People at press conferences always say 'Why are you wearing uniforms? Why are you so against the individual?' And we look out on them, and here they all are in blue jeans and a plaid shirt and cowboy boots. And even more grotesque is seeing people in Europe dressed the same way. Our uniforms are limited to a few thousand people outside of ourselves, and you're talking to millions of people who dress alike. That's perfectly Devo, right there."

However, the market for Devo gear has grown into quite a large commercial operation, to the extent that catalogues are included with the albums, all major credit cards accepted. Casale has an answer to that one, too.

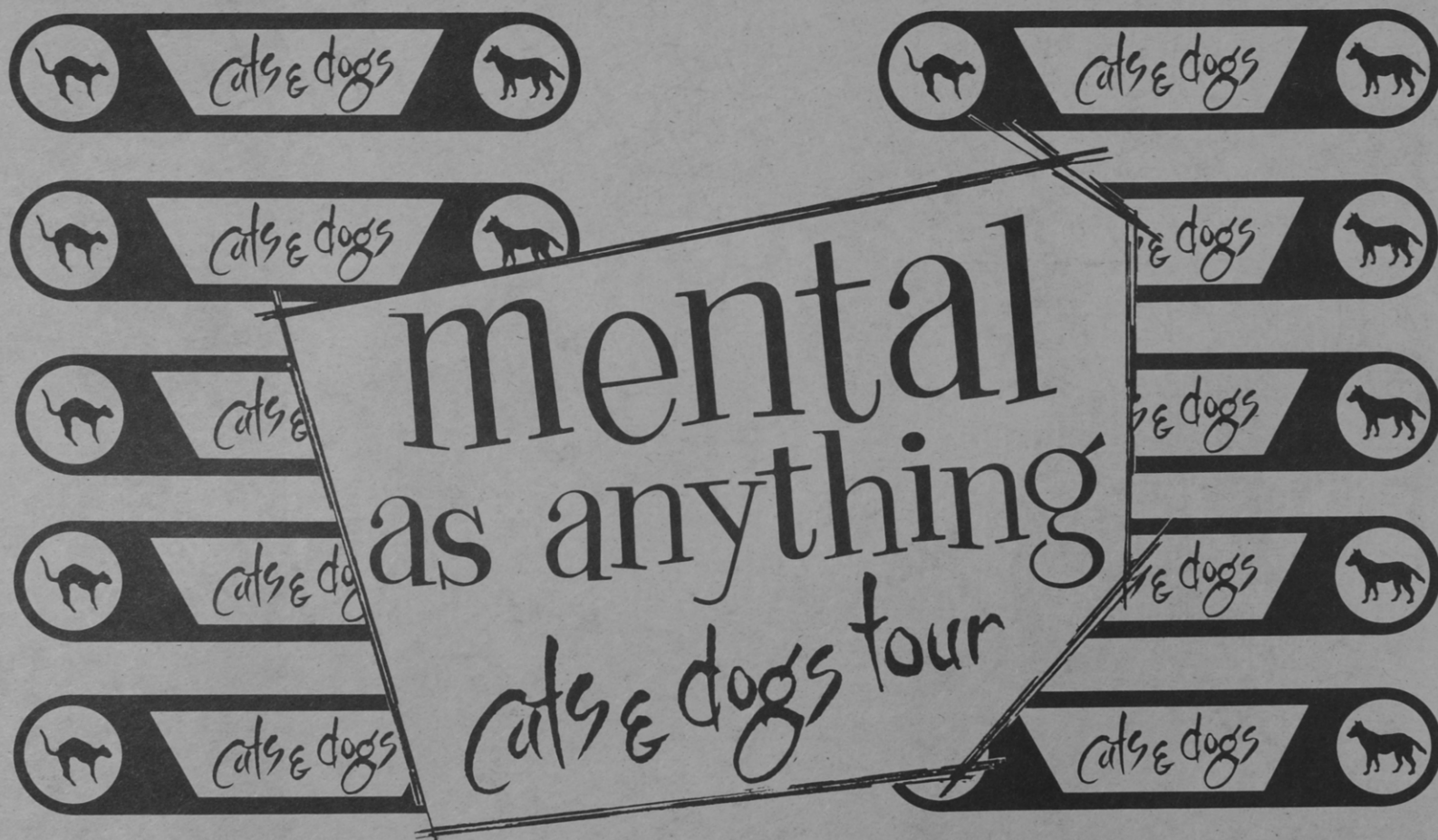
"What we've attempted to do is merely stave off the various bootleggers who have taken Devo ideas and Devo creative dress, and do bad facsimiles of it to sell at exorbitant prices. Somewhere in 1979, we contacted manufacturers and had them make the exact things that we've made for ourselves to wear onstage. We've made them available at a mass level to whoever wanted them, at about the most reasonable price you can come up with, and still not lose money."

"We were operating in the red on that, but after *Freedom Of Choice*, we started to come back up. We're not embarrassed about our items, because we made them for ourselves first, we like them, and we know which spirit they were made in. We didn't see anything wrong with making them available to people, since people were going to buy these things anyway."

"They buy all kinds of horrible things from other groups. That standard, corporate, unimaginative crap, where a T-shirt company makes exactly the same T-shirt for two dozen groups, and just puts their logo on it. We have nothing like that, they're all at least unique, and entertaining. Kinda like educational toys."

Devo's latest incarnation, *New Traditionalists*, is partly an attack on the moral revival that has hit America with Reaganism, the fundamental, back-to-the-pioneer-days, right-wing school of thought. Listening to 'Beautiful World', it sounds as though someone is rather depressed with the whole thing.

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new album **CATS & DOGS** features 'if you leave me can I come too' and 'too many times' and many more!

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