

Southern Fried Wes

very heavy record. Exploring those things without any regard for the consequences is still a valid thing. Big Star's *Sister Lovers*, to use a cliché, that's an emotional exorcism."

Was this an easy record to make? *Rolling Stone* talked about friction.

"Yes and no. We did do a session and started a record that was very hard to make. We were producing ourselves, but it just wasn't right. Everyone wasn't together. Then we met [producer] Jack [Joseph Puig] through Andy Stuermer, my friend who's in Jellyfish. Jack's been making records for years, co-produced and engineered both Jellyfish records. I like to think Andy is a confidant, someone you can talk about song writing with. We're such totally different people, go about our crafts so differently, but I think he's such a talent. I have so much respect for him, and I've learnt so much about music from him. I love those records, as misunderstood as they were. He's never got what's due him. Through him, I met Jack.

"Sonically, sound can be the same thing. Once you get that realisation, how much better you feel. But we've only made three records! Imagine what someone like Jerry Garcia thinks when he hears that — someone who's really done some work! I'm glad we don't really know anything. That's what keeps us afloat. With *Money Maker*, it was a local band making a record. When we went on the road, we knew we didn't want to make that record over onstage. We wanted to change — and on *Southern Harmony*, even more. It took us like four years to realise that if we don't want to reproduce the record on stage, why should we conceptualise putting the stage in the studio? It took three and a half years to realise that, the simplest thing. We still recorded the same way — live — but the mentality was different. It wasn't just about creating a live scenario on this record."

All the jamming you do live — does that help keep it fresh? "I think the selfish part is that the music has made us become those musicians, whereas we'd really be limiting ourselves to keep to those arrangements as they'd been done. Maybe that's

pompous, but it's a very musical thing. I don't think, musically, the band can do that because of the kind of cats they are. On the other hand I'd like to justify it by saying we're not going to let the audience let us be the band that just goes: 'Yes, 'Hard To Handle', 'Jealous Again', in the

same place every night. I don't let you do that. So you might lose a few people along the way. Then again, we've never written one song to make a video. It gets back to that hit thing — we make a record, hand it to the record company, tell them: 'You pick the single.'

Do you sense your success has helped other bands get signed and does it make you feel good?

"[Long pause] Maybe this will sound so pompous, it's ridiculous, but I look at a band I wholeheartedly love, like Little Feat. How many bands ripped off shit they were doing and never gave them credit? They came from a very specific traditional background, took all these forms and made their own thing. How many bands owned up to the things they learned from Little Feat at the time? Like the Eagles. First there's Gram, the Byrds, then Poco, then, all of a sudden, there's the Eagles, and they never talk

about Poco or GP. Some of those early Poco records are fuckin' great. So maybe I'm being pompous. Maybe we don't mean those things, but I've heard and seen bands do certain things and they've said certain things that reek of a familiarity, and I'm like: 'I'm sorry, but I know the bands around when we came out weren't doing that.' Makes you look over your shoulder. But maybe I'm wrong. I've been wrong many times! Isn't it ironic that you in turn are an influence now, after being slagged as derivative?

"I guess I've regretted some of the comments I've made about the resurgence of punk rock. I feel jealous and angry, so that's why I lash out with this easy fuckin' bullshit thing. That stems from: 'Why doesn't Green Day get the fuckin' shit we got?' I'll tell you one thing, we had a lot more punk rock in us than those motherfuckers did! The blues has always had punk rock in. I can see now, after I say something, that I'm so wrong. Kids at 16 — when I was 16, I'd have thought Chris Robinson was the biggest asshole, a dick for saying that. I told *Rolling Stone*: 'Punk rock — what a novel idea. Didn't sell two million of it last time, they'll get it this time!' It's bullshit of me to say that. If there's a kid at 16, and he's into that, go for it. Go all out. Green Day, good for you. I get wrapped up in my personal thing. And I don't like hearing people say they don't like being rock stars. Who does? It's bullshit. I just want to play music and sing. That's all I'm good at. Any other thing in the way, I'll fuck it up somehow. That's the reality of being a real musician, an artist. Then there's that other half of: 'No-one made you sign on the dotted line. No-one made you make videos.'"

But does it piss you off to be portrayed as archetypal, wasted rock stars?

"No. I guess there are obvious things I do to live up to that. I do go out in public sometimes, and I'm fuckin' wasted and people see that. And most people look at the Black Crowes as a bunch of fuckin' rednecks anyway. Like Bill Clinton. He's a horrible president, probably because he's a bad man. But people think he's

a bad President because he's from Arkansas! Why doesn't Ted

Kennedy pass some more fuckin' anti-drug legislation with that red nose of his? It's the same thing. I suppose I involve myself in the politics of popular music with my comments. What's wrong about it is that as a fan I can see it's

bullshit of me to talk shit

about Courtney Love. I haven't heard her record. I didn't read that *Rolling Stone*. I'm playing the same game people have been playing with me — just listening to what somebody else [says]."

Finally, have you read the thriller *Strip Tease*, by Carl Hiaasen? Here's an excerpt: 'It came her turn to dance on the main stage. Kevin put on a cut by the Black Crowes, which woke up the whole joint. The song was fast and nasty and Erin loved it. She kicked and whirled and double-clutched, working out lots of unspent energy.'

"That's in the book? Great [big laugh]. That's crazy. You know that play *Angels in America*, about AIDS? He wrote the title 'cause he heard 'She Talks To Angels' on the radio. Yeah, that's cool. I wish I was in JG Ballard's *Crash*. That's the latest thing I've read. Have just started *The Venus Hunters*. *Crash* blew my fuckin' mind! Read it on airplanes right through Europe."

KERRY DOOLE

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