

An interview with Green Day's Mike Dirnt.

It's not often you get a chance to have a chinwag with a 23 year old squillionaire, but the day Mike Dirnt (bass player with Green Day) called was just such a day. By a fantastic coincidence Mike was the same age as me and, even spookier, he was in the fantabulous pop punk band Green Day whilst I owned one of their albums. By carefully inspecting a *Rolling Stone* cover I ascertained Mike possessed arms and legs just like me! Pretty soon I'd forgotten the yawning chasm Mike's mega moolah may have driven between us and the conversation was up and steaming. Come on and join in, there's no need to be shy.

Part One: Outside the Square Window

Using Mike's eyes I was able to visualise the backyard of a middle class house in a middle class neighbourhood somewhere in California. Here's what Mike saw through the square window (it may have been round).

"My cat and some broken down cars up front. The neighbourhood were I live is very colourful, to say the least. It's a really middle class neighbourhood."

Is it Really Mike?

Well known for his quirky, madcap sense of humour (Mike has ambitions of one day being a stand-up comedian), the question 'Are you really Mike?' has to be asked, just in case Mike's got the janitor to ring. Thankfully, Mike seems able to prove it is he, and provides intimate details should anyone else be placed in the position of wondering 'But are you really Mike Dirnt?'

"I wrote the bass line for 'Longview' on acid, I'm the only one that knows the tattoo on my forearm means marijuana, and I'm talking with broken teeth from *Woodstock*."

Woodstock and Denture Disaster

Here Mike relates that the only thing worse than playing *Woodstock 94* is playing *Woodstock 94* and getting your teeth kicked in.

"It was a dumb show, we went there to see if we could make it even dumber. We went there to make a mockery, of the show and at the fiasco at the end we ended up getting in a fist fight on stage with all the security guards. I ended up

getting tackled and busted a couple of teeth. It was pretty wild. We had to be talked into playing it, it was such a ridiculous suggestion we play."

The Punkiest Thing Since 77 and Hepatitis Horror

Luckily for the accident prone lads in Green Day, not every show ends in as painful consequences as *Woodstock 94*. Thanks to their phlegm spitting antics in Europe, however, some of Green Day's livelier small shows still carry the risk of medical misadventure

"We did one show that was a real punk show in a small club. We were gobbin' back and forth with our friends and the reporter for the *NME* thought it was about the punkest happening since 1977. Now everywhere I go I'm trying not to get hepatitis. I like the English press because it's educated and people read, as opposed to the States, where people are spoon-fed their music by MTV. In 1991, when we toured Europe playing 64 shows in three months, it put us ahead of a lot of bands. For our live shows, going to Europe helped a lot."

Punks? Not Us, No Way, Not on Your Nellie

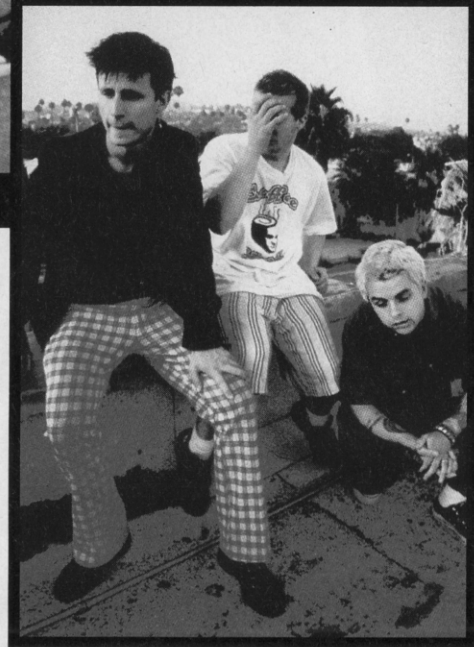
For the affable and agreeable Mike, the only thing that seemed to get on his otherwise calm nerves was any mention of the P word whatsoever.

"We are not a punk band, we're a rock band, the rock band of today. Anyone playing arenas or 5,000 seater clubs and calling themselves a punk band is only fooling themselves. You can have all the punk influence you want, but there's not a punk show I've ever been to with 5,000 other people. I don't think there's that many punks."

Insomniac

Of course, the reason for all this stadium filling is the mega unit shifting (industry biz talk!) quality of *Dookie*. However, the lads have not been resting on laurel wreaths, and in a short space of time have already got a short album (half an hour) called *Insomniac* out.

"I don't think this album is for candy-asses. I think this album could be con-



strued as *Dookie*'s evil twin. It's a play-at-the-highest-possible-volume type record, or when driving really fast. If you're living close to neighbours, it's a play-at-higher-than-highest-possible-volume to piss your neighbours off."

Beat on Da Brat Wiv a Baseball Bat

"*Insomniac* touches on some subjects that people don't like to hear about. The song 'Brat' is about a college student waiting till their parents die to get their inheritance."

Mixed Reviews

Are Green Day still Popsicle of the Week with the kids? If they aren't, Mike isn't too bothered.

"The new album's out and we're getting mixed reviews all the way from it's brilliant and people loving it, to MTV playing clips of some kid who probably hates us anyway saying: "*It sucks*." I think this album is moving us in the direction I want to move, and that's getting rid of these fucking morons who don't get us in the first place. At this point we could afford to lose a few."

On Being Wickedly Dissed

Despite appearing affable, lovable chaps, not everybody loves the Green Day boys. Grumpy old punkers seem to find Green Day almost as easy a target as poor old Mr Jello Biafra.

"People hear the name Green Day and they totally blow off any lyrical content whatsoever. They heard *Dookie*, didn't like it. I hear something I dislike, I ignore it, as opposed to going out and slagging it. At least we're putting things out for people to have an opinion on."

Part Two: Fantabulous Green Day Facts

Here's some surprising facts for you to cut out and keep (should you want to muti-

late this glorious magazine). Some are to do with Green Day, whilst others deal more exclusively with Mike.

Sweet Children Vs Green Day

"We were called Sweet Children but we grew out of that. We won't grow out of Green Day any day of the week. We're 23, we are no longer Sweet Children."

Youthful Influences

Just what sort of sounds did Mike check out when he was sweet 16?

"A lot of local bands like Neurosis. I listened to the Replacements and Hüsker Dü. I didn't have a stereo till I was 19."

Previous Employment

"I moved out of home when I was 15 and got a job as a seafood cook, which lasted about three and a half years."

Fashion Statement

"I don't ever want to be a fashion victim, I just think the only pants that fit me are from the 1970s."

Hobbies

"I get on my motorcycle and ride my 1980 Suzuki 450. I wear a helmet, but if I get up in the woods I take my helmet off."

Most Admired Person

"My stepfather. He fucked up for years and years, but he instilled a lot of values in me before he died, and I thought at the end of his life he had it figured out. Bob Mould is a person I respect. His musical integrity and intentions never wavered, he put out what he had to put out. I have a lot of respect for musicians who don't have images."

Favourite Bands

If these bands were playing in Mike's neighbourhood, he might check 'em out, if he knew... perhaps.

"I'd go and see Weezer and the Muffs. I don't know shit about what's up and coming."

Time Machine Question

Finally the trivia question that has to be asked. What year would you zip off to should you chance upon a fully working time machine?

"1963. My car was built then. It's a cheap old Melba. I keep it around and work on it. 1963 was an inspirational time in rock and roll. I like the music and clothes."

Part Three: Potential Controversy

As the interview was winding down, Mike started quizzing me on bands from New Zealand and Australia. Although he hadn't heard of many, there was one band Mr Dirnt knew very well...

"This Silverchair stuff sucks It just sounds like Southern rock. If you ask me, you could take that band, you could take Pearl Jam, you could take the whole lot of that shit from Neil Young's corner of the States and grind it up and spit it out. I bought *Harvest* 'cause everyone said it was great. They couldn't pay me to listen to the whole thing through."

Get Those Pens Ready!

Oblivious to the fiery passions and prolific prose that can result from these sort of statements, Mr Dirnt hadn't quite finished giving vent to his opinions on the state of modern rock...

"Offspring sound like Boston to me. Old, horrible, 70s rock."

KEV LIST

Green Day play Auckland's Logan Campbell Centre on February 15, 1996.