

Welcome to our Wholly world

by Tricia Romano

Televisions. Lots of them. Six to be exact. Two stacked on top of each other in the garage-turned-bedroom. Old 70s-looking types made of natural wood. One works, the other is forever turned off.

One TV is in each of lead singer Billy Thornton's two roommates' rooms. There are another two TV's in his room. There is a small TV that is used for special top-secret reasons. The other watchable one is stuck in the middle of a bunch of odd assorted videotapes of horror movies and Ren and Stimpy cartoons.

They claim not to watch a lot of TV. Right.

This is the land of the Wholes, one of the last remaining dinosaurs in the Las Vegas underground scene. They first began playing their twisted, entertaining brand of psychedelic punk roughly four years ago. They've released two demos, they are featured on some compilation tapes overseas, and they have a core audience that follows them to every show. So why are they still here? ("No one's died yet," said drummer Tom Stone.)

When are the Wholes going to get the hell out of Vegas?

Probably, never, or at least not for a long while. Stone is still in the process of completing his fine arts degree at UNLV, as a good majority of the Wholes are still completing school. This does not seem to bother them. They claim to like it here.

Along with Stone, the Wholes consist of an odd as-

sortment of guys. There's guitarist Bob Gifford, the quiet one, who spent much of the interview outside of Thornton's crowded psychedelic horror hole. (To get any kind of response out Gifford, the guys would act as an intermediate, asking him the questions and relaying the response back themselves.) On that cold night Gifford looked more like a deep, philosophy student than the guitar player for the most offbeat band in Vegas.

Stone, a tall, lanky guy who emits deep growling, "Yumms," is considered the *artiste* of the bunch, went to high school with Gifford and Thornton. It was there that the seeds of the Wholes were planted.

It was also at Valley High School that the Wholes picked up the self-proclaimed Great Big Bamboo Rain Stick, the Spiritual Guider, Tom Powers. This is a man who was voted Most Unique in his senior year. This is a man who never stops smiling.

There's Christophe Crispian the Gubbler (don't ask), and bassist ID. B. Shjive (real name withheld.) And there's Thornton himself, the mastermind of this original entity. His calm, thoughtful demeanor is contradictory to onstage crazed and lunatic self. In his spare time, he devours everything Stephen King and Dean R. Koontz have ever written, and he finally admitted to watching movies, lots of them. Good and bad, but mostly the bad gory B types.

Back to the TV's. They figure largely into a Wholes show.



photo by Kimberley McGee

Wholes hang in dead yard

So do the assorted horror clips. That's where Crispian the Gubbler comes in. He's the TV and movie guy. "Multi media," Thornton calls it. "Multi sensory perception. You use all your senses," he continued, "Sight, sound and smell."

They way they figure it, there's something for everyone at a Wholes gig. If you get bored with the tunes, (not likely), you can tune in to the various flicks on the screens. If you're tired of watching the band, (highly unlikely) you can divert your attention to the usual chaotic bunch of mosh-

ers. And if you still can't wake up, the odour de perspiration emitting from the pit will surely kick your ass in gear.

As Thornton put it, there are not too many bands in Vegas who will steer towards the unconventional side of music, largely because many local bands want to work their way out of town and onto MTV. This is not what the Wholes are about. The only way they see themselves on MTV is at three in the morning when no one is watching, so that they don't scare too many people away.

"I think Vegas bands are

afraid to make music that you can't dance to, or that you can't sing along to," offered Thornton. "I think they think too much of what the audience is going to think," he said.

Or maybe, most Vegas bands are scared that no one will understand. "I don't think anybody who has seen this band can pinpoint us. I ask everyone of my friends 'What do we sound like?'" said the singer. "Everybody has something different to say, and nobody's given me the right answer."

reviews

sledge-hammering guitars. Really. These guys probably kicked over a couple of hornet's nests, stood in the angry, stinging swarm, and wrote the material for Nurse. It's actually the kind of raw power found on U2's *War*, without Bono's gentler vocals to soften the mix. But Therapy? does possess a lighter side.

"What a lot of people miss about our music," guitarist Andy Cairns points out, "is (our) sense of humor."

"I think it's because if you play aggressive music," explains Ewing, "you're supposed to become self-obsessed. People expect to be beaten

into submission by this wall of noise and don't look further into it—to all the references."

With little investigation, we find the irony of a girl who grinds her teeth to the gums ("Teethgrinder") and the furious techno-aggressive "Hypermania," which should ultimately hit the club scene.

Born in Belfast, Ireland in 1989, Therapy? has since released four warm-n-fuzzies previous to *Nurse*. In three-plus years, Therapy? has not only cranked out five albums, but has evolved into a European touring experience, beating its equipment into

oblivion and brawling to its heart's content.

"There are too many bands playing tourist music," contends Cairns.

"The quiet man with a pint of Gunnies eating potatoes," adds Ewing, sarcastically.

Clearly, Therapy? intends to rip, tear, and snarl its way into the hearts of metal fans everywhere. Their latest offering, *Nurse*, should come as welcome relief to those weary of the mediocre and mundane. Consider it therapy.

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