



## interview

### You can't wash your hands of this *Dirty* Thing

by Tricia Romano

Distortion—lots of it. That's the main instrument used on Sonic Youth's latest release *Dirty*.

Not since Jimi Hendrix has an artist used the guitar so effectively. What sets Sonic Youth apart is the methods in which they use distortion. The effects can be piercing and shrieking, or it can soothe, but always creates a good song.

Guitarist Thurston Moore and bassist Kim Gordon, alongside guitarist Lee Ranaldo, and drummer Steve Shelley, mold an army of sound with their trademark noise. Contrary to other guitar-based bands, Sonic Youth's songs don't blend together. Each tune has a personality of its own. This is due in part to shared vocal duties of Gordon and Moore.

In the all-out punkers "Swimsuit Issue" and "Nic Fit,"

Moore takes the lead. "Nic Fit," is a strange, silly little punk tune which sounds just like its name.

On "Drunken Butterfly," Gordon breathes amidst the spinning, dizzying guitars, "I love you, I love you, I love you, what's your name?" "Drunken" is one of the choice tracks of the CD.

"Sugar Kane" features the signature wall of distortion, very reminiscent of some of the tunes off *Goo*.

Gordon does a Babes In Toyland-type turn on "Orange Rolls, Angel's Spit," with some cat-shrieking vocals to match the sharp piercing guitars.

Interestingly enough, Sonic Youth have not gone commercial at this point. It would have been easy enough, working with producer Butch Vig (who produced Nirvana's *Nevermind*), to soften up the edges, gloss it over, and put a couple of really catchy choruses in there.

But, they didn't. In fact, *Dirty*, is about as smooth as a piece of sandpaper. Rough all over. No wonder it's dirty, it would hurt a hell of a lot to wash with something this raw, and this good.

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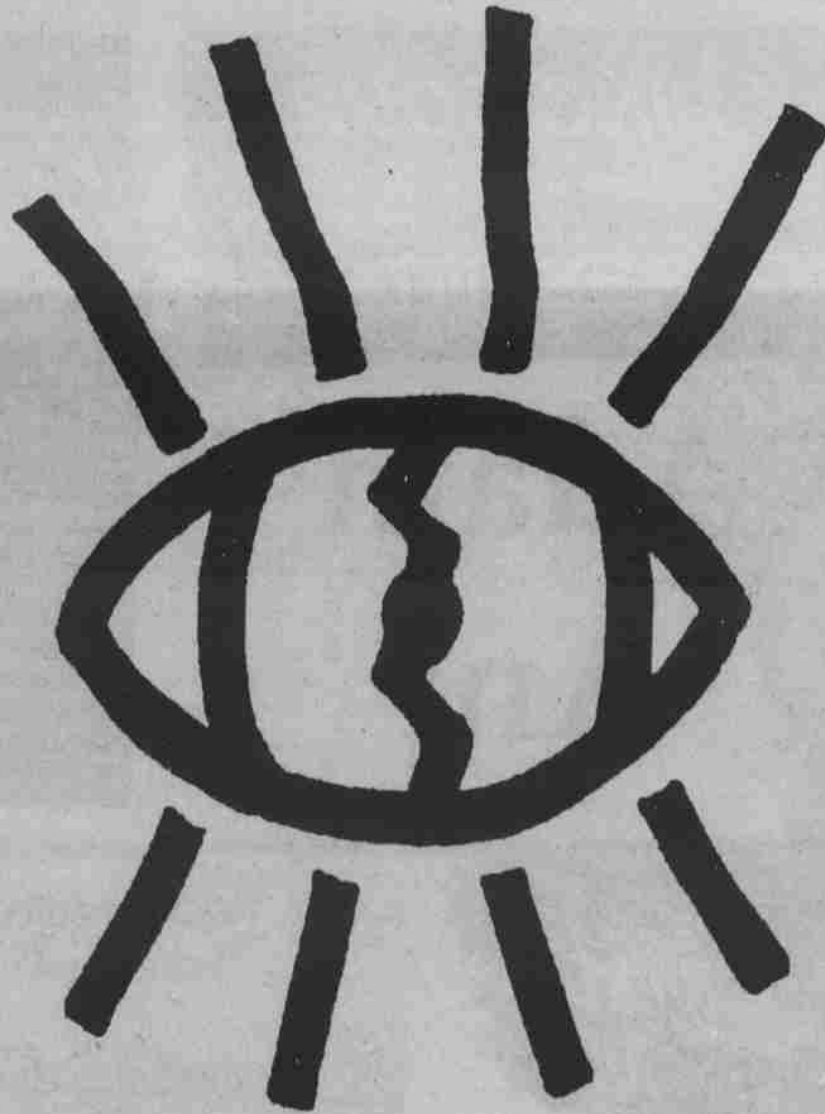
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