

PULSE

What's cheaper than alcohol, better tasting than Robitussin and legal? It's nitrous oxide — a.k.a. laughing gas — and, on campuses across the nation, students are turning to it for an alternative way to top their buzz.

instantly induces a feeling of giddiness and exhilaration. Whippets and inhalants have been dubbed the "stepchild in the war on drugs" by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and their use and abuse is increasing among the 17-to-25-year-old crowd. Because of the nature of the drug — categorized as neither a dangerous drug nor a food product regulated by the Food and Drug Administration — abuse often goes unchecked by authorities.

officials, concerned about the rise in whippet use by young adults, are emphasizing the dangers whippets pose.

Nitrous oxide can shut down breathing or cause irregular heartbeats, says Dr. Jacqueline Dzierzak, a national spokesperson for the American Dental Association. "N₂O takes the place of oxygen in the bloodstream, which makes you high," Dzierzak explains. "But if you get too much of it, you pass out. Then your lungs and breathing shut down, and you can die."

Photograph by: Lisa Marie, The Lantern, Ohio State U.



Just Say N₂O

Whether it's in large containers of the gas alone (which are used by dentists and sold in medical supply houses) or in whipped cream spray cans (known as whippets), nitrous oxide (N₂O) is readily available to those who prefer their joy in artificial forms. Users inflate balloons from the large canisters and then inhale the gas from the balloons, or they simply hold a can of whipped cream upright, press the nozzle and breathe deeply.

Escapists who aren't old enough to buy a sixer of Milwaukee's worst can stroll into the local supermarket, purchase a few cans of whipped cream and guarantee they will end the night with spots in front of their eyes and a nasty headache in the morning.

When inhaled, the colorless gas

"The product is abused because it's not intended for anything other than food service," says Emil Corwin, a representative for the FDA. "It's the same as kids sniffing glue. It's not meant for that, but what can we do? They're going to do it anyway."

In fact, the only time whippets or N₂O use becomes a law enforcement issue is when it's involved in a crime. "Unless someone robs a bank, steals a car, etc. [while under the influence of N₂O], it really doesn't involve us," says Gary Davis, a spokesperson for the Drug Enforcement Agency. "We have no laws at this time making nitrous oxide illegal."

That may change, however. Health

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, limb spasms, central nervous system damage, blood oxygen depletion and liver and kidney damage are among the irreversible effects associated with inhalants, including N₂O.

Nonetheless, college students continue to "crack the whip." Vince, an Ohio State U. student who refused to reveal his last name, describes whippets as "hippie crack."

"The buzz is real quick, and a lot of deadheads like it, but other crowds do it, too," he says. "It's big in the Greek crowd."

Abuse of N₂O has been linked to at least one death. In 1993, a man died in a

Would you like some pie to go with that?

Columbus, Ohio, suburb after inhaling an unknown amount of N₂O.

This incident, along with increased sales in the Ohio State U. area, led state legislators this year to outlaw sales of N₂O canisters for anything other than food or dental purposes in the state of Ohio. This law may set a precedent, allowing other states and cities to pass laws and restrictions in an effort to whip young people into shape.

■ John Lasker, *Columbus Alive!*, Ohio State U., and Amy Dorsett, *The Houstonian*, Sam Houston State U., contributed to this story.

POP

Love Jones is the best band you've never heard of.

With their matching polyester suits and smooth vocal harmonies, the band at first glance could be lumped with the new

show since Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

Onstage at a recent L.A. industry show, Love Jones live proved a harrowing gauntlet of incessantly hilarious one-liners and truly fearless crowd provocation. Within three songs, Love Jones front man and *gent provocateur* Ben Daugherty managed to insult not only the opening act, the headliner and the audience, but also both of the show's sponsors and the

— have some definite ideas about what constitutes good rock and what doesn't.

"I'll tell you what's wrong with rock and roll," Palmer says. "We're not 14 anymore, and it's not 1977 when Robin Zander was young and Kiss still wore makeup and Aerosmith was still strung out. That's the sad thing. And what's worse, when it was 1977, I wasn't even 14. There is no perfect world for rock and roll."

Daugherty agrees. "The problem with rock is that bands should just accept it," he says. "You're doing the same tired old bullshit that's been going on forever. You should just embrace it and rise to the top. Become a demigod, do the blow, f—k the chicks and guys and kill yourself."

The last honest rock band in America.

■ Glenn McDonald, *Assistant Editor*

Jonesing for Love

breed of cocktail rockers like Combustible Edison (or even the larger category of novelty bands like They Might Be Giants). But Love Jones, like Steve Austin, are better, smarter, faster. They're what happens when teen angst becomes mellow gold — when punks don't die before they get old.

Not content with the self-conscious kitsch of a "lounge act," the band wrings very real emotion from the soaring melodies on their truly cool debut CD, *Here's To The Losers*. Equally dissatisfied with schmaltzy swank, they put on the most hilarious and confrontational live

owner of the venue.

"The idea is to go out and give 100 percent, even if you feel like shit," says Daugherty. "Try to relate to the audience.

Don't put yourself up on a pedestal — just get up there and have a good time."

"And get as many free drinks as possible," adds vocalist Jonathon Palmer.

It may be the band's shared experience in punk rock circles that fuels their assaultive live show. Or it may be the gin and tonics. Either way, Love Jones — rounded out by drummer Stuart Johnson, bassist Barry Thomas and guitarist Chris Hawpe



Hey, good lookin', be back to pick you up in an hour.