

Hard-Ons

Biography

Everybody knows that The Hard-Ons have always been a pop band, right? That links to folks like Henry Rollins and bands like Poison Idea aside, they've always harboured a not-so-secret fetish for the enormous and soaring melodies of Big Star?

It's there on *Smell My Finger*. It's there on *Yummy!*. And it's most definitely there on 2003's *Very Exciting!*. However, this tendency has always been tempered by their equal love of thrash, hardcore and metal.



So, for their tenth full-length studio album, The Hard-Ons – Ray Ahn, Blackie and Pete Kostic - decided to try something a little different. They decided to make a pop record – a pure power pop record, but done in that unique Hard-Ons way. They're still playing with the same irreverent fury that has made them perennial live favourites around the globe, but they're doing so with a batch of songs that in a perfect world would be FM radio hits.

The first thing you'll notice on **Most People Are A Waste Of Time** is how far Blackie has come as a vocalist. If his performance on songs like 'Race Track' from *Very Exciting!* (the first Hard-Ons album to see him step up as lead singer) were notable in comparison to what we're used to from his efforts with Nunchukka Superfly, then the melodies and harmonies on 'I'm Hurt I'm In Pain' and 'Knowing My Luck...' are something else entirely.

The second thing you might notice is that original vocalist Keish (who left the band a few years ago but teamed up with them again last year for a national tour) contributes lead vocals to three of the tracks: 'There Goes One Of The Creeps That Hassled My Girlfriend', 'Stop Crying' and 'Her Smile Is A Wish I Can't Obtain'. His is a return that's sure to be welcomed warmly by long-time Hard-Ons aficionados.

Most People Are A Waste Of Time, however, isn't that big a production. There's no Van Dyke Parks string arrangements, no Arthur Lee-styled multitracking. Ray plays vibraphone on the outro to 'The Ballad of Katlin Cartlidge', but that's about it. Otherwise, there are just lots of guitars and LOTS of vocals.

"We tried to play as brutally as we normally do," explains Ray. "The heavy handedness is still there: downstrokes, distortion, etcetera. We wanted to juxtapose the thick punk sound with melodies, harmonies and the odd melodic open-chord chiming guitar. As someone said in a review for us a long time ago, making a Frankenstein's monster pop by grafting the heart and mind of The Beach Boys onto the body of Motorhead."

This isn't the end of The Hard-Ons as we know them, however. Their next record, planned for the not-too-distant future, will feature plenty of thrash, hardcore and metal but no pop whatsoever; an aggressive counterpoint to the overall sweetness of **Most People Are A Waste Of Time**.

If all of this sounds like some kind of perverse, complex in-joke, remember that The Hard-Ons just celebrated their 21st birthday, and if your twenties isn't the decade for trying new things then when the hell is?

- Adam D Mills



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