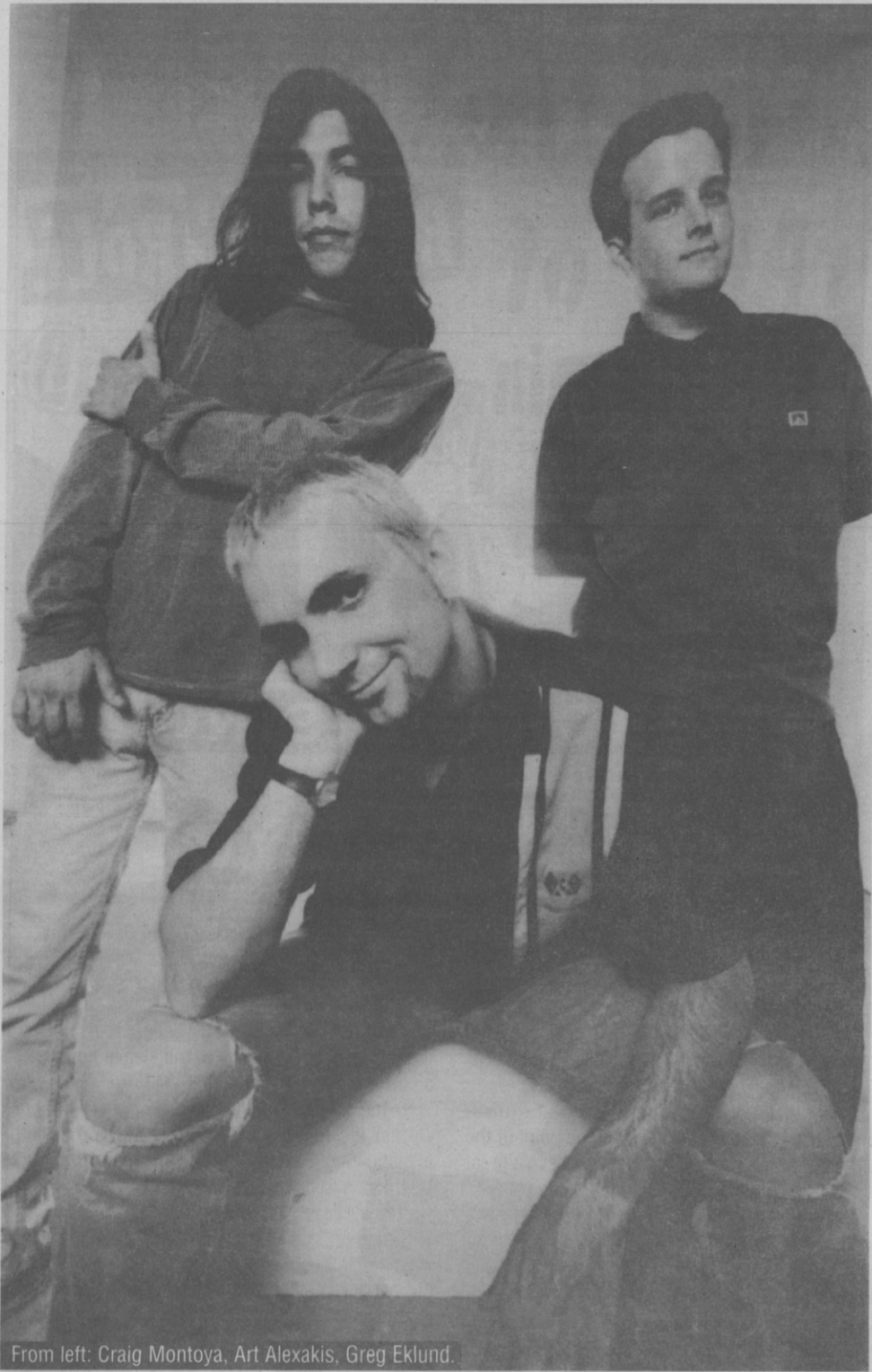


EVERCLEAR

CLEAN AND SOBER



From left: Craig Montoya, Art Alexakis, Greg Eklund.

At the moment things are pretty hot for Mr Art Alexis. His feisty guitar pop threesome, Everclear, are enjoying the rewards of a gruelling touring schedule that has at last brought the success they'd hoped for. Unfortunately that success means more touring. At present Mr Alexis is more than hot, he's positively burning up in the heat of the cruel Phoenix, Arizona, sun.

"I'm in Phoenix, Arizona, for the beginning of our West Coast tour. The temperature here can reach up to 131 degrees around lunch-time."

Mr Alexis then gave a brief but illuminating run-down on just how hot 131 degrees was.

"The heat here is miserable heat, 110 degree heat is unbearable. When the thermometer gets up to 120 degrees, animals start dying, and when it reaches 130, fires start up in the middle of nowhere, spontaneous combustion occurs."

Being a friendly sort of chap, Art asked me what I was up to. After briefly explaining the intricacies of the fine Sega game *Bruian Laras Cricket* (far superior to the Nintendo cricket game), Art expounded his own views on the fine old English game and crass American attitudes to sport.

"When I was in England I watched a game of cricket, but it went on for days. Having stoppages for tea and lunch seemed a very gentlemanly, English thing to do. That sort of gentlemanly and delicate way of playing sport doesn't translate very well in America. In America, it's put the ball somewhere and kill as many people as possible to do it. That's the American way!"

To help preserve Bill Clinton's vision of the 'American way', Art was playing some extra concerts.

"I'm working really hard to elect Bill Clinton. I think he believes in what he's doing, whereas Bob Dole is a scary grampa. I'm cool with Bill. I think his wife's cool too."

Art also thinks his own wife's pretty rockin'. Because he's a responsible family man, there's

no shilly-shallying on the tour bus for him.

"On the bus I'm constantly doing business. Other than playing guitar, I don't do much else. If I had a hobby [on tour] it would have been sex, but now I've got a wife it's just taking care of the books."

Given the gruelling tour schedule Everclear endure, I wondered if perhaps Art drank a lot of coffee to keep on chugging. However, after years of chemical abuse, his body is now a temple, and the brown bubbling beverage was not going to despoil it.

"I don't drink coffee. No chemicals for me, not even sugar. After years of alcohol abuse I have a bad chemical imbalance, so now I'm kinda clean living. I miss sugar, I wish I could eat it."

Whilst Everclear's last album, *Sparkle and Fade*, dealt with the themes of small towns and chemical abuse, the 'lads' next album has moved to the big smoke.

"Our next record will focus on cities. It's the next link in the chain. It'll be about what goes on in your head when you're in a big city. I've written 20 songs for the next album, but we won't be able to record till October."

It was at about this point in our verbal interaction Mr Alexis was snatched from my grasp. However, in our brief verbal encounter, I discovered he'd turned down a chance to play with the (un)reformed Sex Pistols, and his favourite movie was presently the heart-warming porker picture *Babe*. However, the most intriguing revelation Art gave me was his dream career after the sparkle has faded with rock 'n' roll.

"I'd seriously like to be a marine biologist and work with dolphins. I think dolphins are the most intelligent form of life on this planet. I think they're just toying with us. I think they've already taken over and are just waiting for us to find out."

KEV LIST

K N I G H T S H A D E

VETERANS DEBUT

Knightshade, arguably the most exposed band on the local rock circuit in the late 1980s, simply disappeared from view at the turn of the decade, only to resurface this year with their debut studio album. Founding member and frontman Wayne Elliot explains what went wrong.

It was all happening to plan in 1987, when Knightshade signed a five year recording contract with Australian major label Mushroom. They enjoyed Top 20 success with the singles 'The Physical You', 'You Don't Need Me', and 'Last Night In The City', and filled the support slot on New Zealand tours by ZZ Top, Guns N' Roses, Iggy Pop and Bon Jovi. Ironically, just when the group appeared to be at their most unstoppable, behind the scenes the machine was grinding to a halt.

"When we signed with Mushroom, there was meant to be an album in the first year — it didn't happen, then the second year it still didn't happen. Not because of a lack of material, but because they just didn't want to do it. Plus, the powers that be were doing other things, like Kylie Minogue, that they were making a lot of money out of."

With Minogue's 'Locomotion' and 'I Should Be So Lucky' doing the business sales-wise, Mushroom were only too happy to open the company coffers to Knightshade, who, at the time, hadn't quite grasped the concept of a recoupable advance.

"A record company will come up with the initial capital, because it comes out of your royalties and publishing. They'll spend money, but you've got to pay it back to them. We were a little bit green in that respect, till after the first video shoot and we got the bill — \$64,000. Our money

was just being squandered without somebody watching the purse strings. A prime example was the two hairdressers we had on stand-by at \$60 an hour for two days during the shoot.

"Until you've done it, you don't realise all the pitfalls within recording contracts. You have to be very careful who you sign with, as a record company can pull out whenever they want to for any reason — if you've got your hair parted in the middle instead of the side, they can just squash the contract. It's very one-sided that way."

Knightshade persevered on into 1990, sending Mushroom new material on a regular basis. The label remained uncommittal, pausing only to give the band an ultimatum they weren't prepared to accept.

"Eventually we had an argument and they said: 'You come to Aussie and work over here or we don't want to know you.' We broke off our relationship with them, but we still had the recording contract for three years, so anything we did during that period was going to be their property. We thought: 'They've got 48 songs, why give them more?' So, we just held back for three years and did other things."

A year after Knightshade's Mushroom contract expired, Grant Hislop of Hark Records came calling with a proposal to rescue and release the band's back catalogue. The resulting collection, *Knightshade*, accomplishes the rather odd dou-



Wayne Elliot.

ble of being a 10-year retrospective, and also Knightshade's debut studio album. The original band line-up of Elliot, Rik Bernards (guitar), Allan Grady (drums), and John Bell (bass), re-recorded all 13 tracks at the Hark-owned Zoo Studios in Hamilton, and despite Elliot describing the process as "rushed", the release of the album has brought about a long overdue sense of relief.

"I'm just very glad it's out and over with. It's like: 'That's gone — next!' I wanted some product out so we could get a profile again, and to let people know we're still here and we still want to do things."

Elliot is not ignorant of the many epic trends

that have occurred in the rock world while Knightshade have been absent, and is realistic about their chances of making an impact in a fickle climate that still generally demands rock 'n' roll be a young man's game.

"There used to be a time where I couldn't walk down the street without being recognised and asked for autographs, and that was a buzz. But once you've done it, you've done it, so it doesn't worry me if it happens again or not. I just want to keep writing music and come up with that song that people are going to be singing in 20 years time."

JOHN RUSSELL