

L to R: King Coffey, Gibby Haynes, Paul Leary.



Have You Ever Been
to **Electriclarryland?**

You really don't have to be too clever to do this 'rock interview' thing, and lord knows I'm not, but even I can tell when things are getting hopeless. Case in point: Gibby Haynes of the Butthole Surfers has just reclined on a luxurious Capitol Records conference room couch, inhaled a good sized fatty, and is now explaining through a cloud of pot smoke how the Turtles played at the White House. I understand sensible conversation is now over in this interview, and it dawns on me that the last 15 minutes were somehow spent talking about cars.

It's a shame, because the Butthole Surfers' new record, *Electriclarryland*, is a mighty nice thing — the Surfers' heinous psychedelic outpourings are sitting more comfortably with their rockist urges, and the whole thing manages to stay a step ahead of the chaos. I'd like to provide some pithy, witty Gibby commentary on the album and band's existence, but right now he's explaining why he thought the harried Capitol promotion person was actually named Cherokee.

Needless to say, the rumours about the band's demise are unfounded, although they have lost bassist Jeff Pinkus and pit bull mascot Mark Farnar (one's dead, one's a family man). In the interim, the band members got some serious work done. Drummer King Coffey put out a lot of good records on his Trance Syndicate label (including some great psychedelic tripp-hop with his own side project Drain, and a fantastic Roky Erikson album), guitarist Paul Leary produced albums for the Meat Puppets, Supersuckers and Bad Livers, while Gibby managed to wind up hanging out with Timothy Leary and in P, a side project for himself and Johnny Depp.

"I met him years ago," Gibby says, "and he was in Austin doing a film, so we'd get together and hang out and rehearse, and then we had a band. It might have been a mistake putting it out on a major label though."

This fun aside, the band headed into the studio with producer Steve Thompson — a strange choice, given his work with Metallica, Guns N' Roses and so forth. It seems this 'metal guy' persona was more press release material than anything else, according to Gibby.

"He did that stuff, but he also did Donna Summer, and David Bowie, and shit. He and his partner were better known for doing dance remixes in the early 80s really."

Not surprisingly, Thompson soon fell by the wayside, and the band "took it back to Texas", with

Paul Leary at the helm, to get things right. The result veers from the aforementioned psychrock into the usual strange stuff — eg. 'TV Star', a love paean to a Mexican talk show host that sounds a lot like a countrified and addled 'Hungry Heart'.

"Yeah, I thought that too, and I played it to a friend of mine and said: 'Does this sound like that Springsteen song?,' and he said: 'Yeah, but not really.'"

Then, of course, there's my favourite, 'Let's Talk About Cars', which is lounge jazzy with a couple of the band's friends chatting away in French as a vocal track.

"I was getting him to ask specific questions about violence in American football, desserts, some sexy stuff, Jerry Lewis — all that stuff you'd ask a French person."

Electriclarryland is what we want from the Buttholes — elements of

nearly every style imaginable, filtered through the sun-baked psychedelia that's inherent in any music from Texas, then given a good shake-up by Gibby and co.. None other than Billy F Gibbons (a spiritual father to all garage punk) once told me he thought the Butthole Surfers were one of the finest bands at work today, a fact that seems to impress Gibby somewhat.

"Billy said that? Cool, he's a cool guy, him and Roky were the originals of all that stuff. You were hanging with him? Did you go eat food with Billy? Last time I saw Roky he was worried he'd have to eat with me. He's a pretty weird guy — he loves Radio Shack and that movie *CHUD*, but he's worried about eating with me."

Despite my efforts, Gibby wasn't up to offering any theories on why Texas has had such a fine history of garage punk, and further prodding somehow got us back to cars and *Bonneville Speed Week*, at which point I pretty much gave up. It can be a problem, this interview thing, but it's at least fun.

KIRK GEE

Butthole Surfers

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