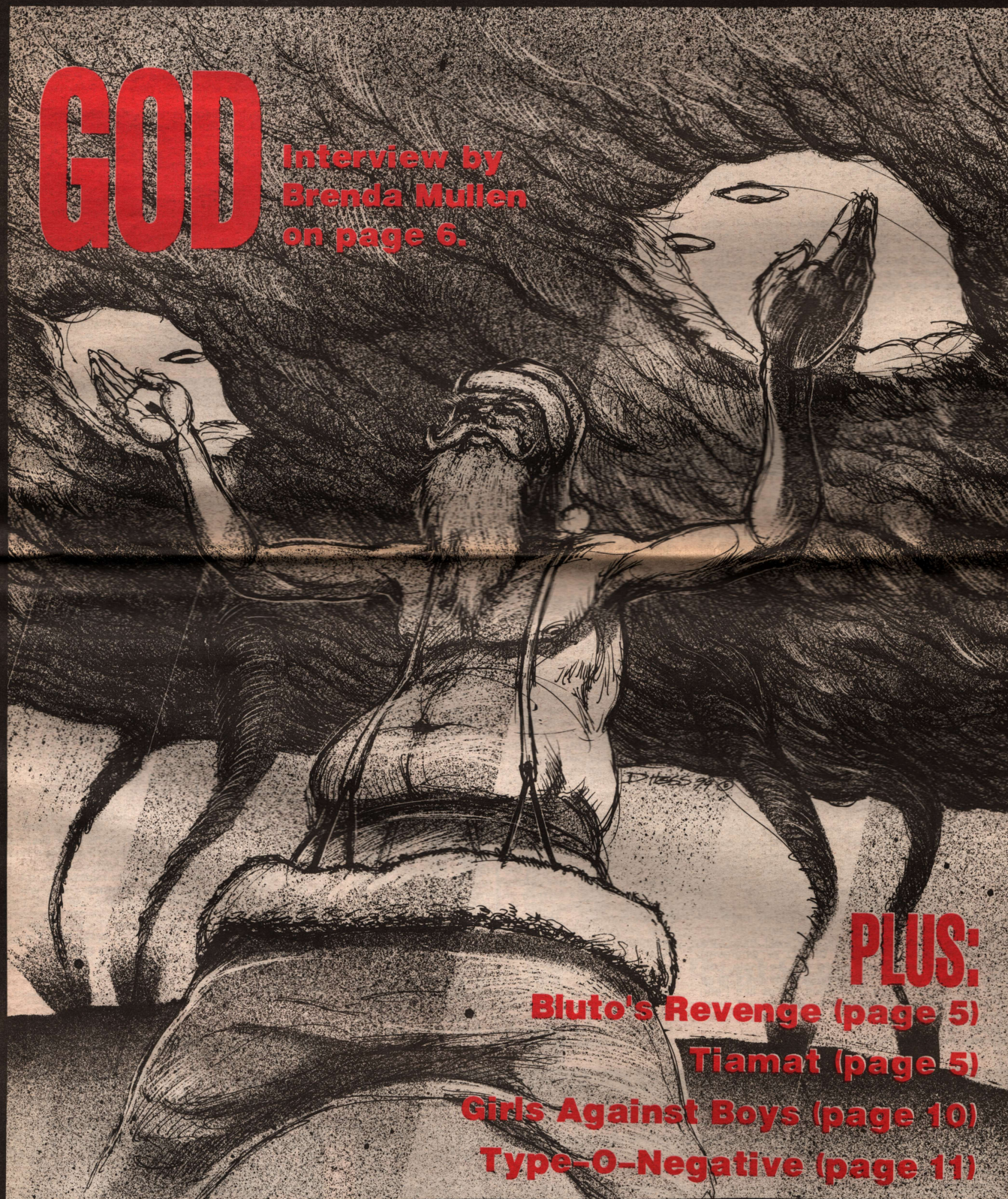


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GOD

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Peering inside Pandora's Box and Seeing the Face of

GOD Interview by Brenda Mullen.



Kevin Martin of the Brit-based ten piece band God knows he will not be appearing on the cover of Details Magazine anytime soon. ("Who are Candlebox," he questioned innocently. "Aren't they some crap metal band?") And even though God has been around since 1987 and appeared on two major record labels, the only people who seem to know about God are saavy journalists and fans of underground music.

"I think there's an un-knowledge and a certain amount of censorship, media-wise, for trend's sake," Kevin reflects. "And everything within that trend is given parameters."

God rising from the underground seems unlikely. Their music is far from being "radio-friendly." The songs on their current release *THE ANATOMY OF ADDICTION* are more like ten-minute (or longer) symphonies of chaos rather than three-minute pop hits. "In America, you've got college radio. Over here, there's virtually no radio stations to play this stuff, and the newspapers put on this facade that they're interested in new music. But all they're interested in is you taking out advertising. And they're interested in whatever is fashionable at that moment, for the young, upcoming readership."

God's music will leave the average Candlebox fan panic-stricken, desperately seeking out a melody they could hum along with, or better yet, scrambling for earplugs. But there are others who seek out bands like God and those people are far beyond driven; for them, most music is boring, trend-ridden garbage. "What's frustrating is often, even people at our own label, have a preconceived idea that an audience won't enjoy the extreme, difficult edge that God's music entails. We supported My Bloody Valentine and people enjoyed it. I did shows with E.A.R. [another project of Kevin Martin's] supporting Pavement, and again it's a young audience and they enjoyed it. So often, people are not given the chance to listen to it."

Record labels have a tendency to give up on a grand plan before they give it a chance. One of the possible reasons, in God's case, would be the enormous line-up of the band: Tim Hodgkinson (sax), Justin Broadrick (guitar), Russell Smith (guitar), Tom Prentice (electric viola), Dave Cochrane (bass), Gary Jeff (bass), John Edwards (double bass), Scott Kiehl (percussion), Lou Ciccolelli (drums) and of course Kevin Martin, who leads this noise orchestra with vocals, sax and samples. Alex Buss guests on bass clarinet. The question is, how to get all of these people out on tour,

particularly in America? Kevin replies, "To get to New York, it would cost 250 quid [that's \$500 per person]."

Suppose, hypothetically speaking, a group of people got together and raised \$5000 for God to come to America? I could sense the gleam in Kevin's eyes over thousands of miles of telephone wire. "I guess Big Cat could take it from there. It would probably mean sleeping on couches and floors a lot of the time. God is a live entity and given the chance, the members of the band would be into it."

"With a big band, we're not going to make any money," continues Kevin. "We may as well realize that. So we're doing it for the love of the music, rather than any long-term financial gain. It's a nightmare trying to find a label that's willing to fly ten people to America to tour. Ministry has paid lip service about bringing God over... it would be nice to hook up with them."

To make matters more confusing, there is the question of how to bring all these people together when they're not busy with their other projects. For instance, guitarist Justin Broadrick is currently on the road with Godflesh. Guitarist Russell Smith's band Skullflower has a new album out and will probably tour. Kevin and Justin just recently finished up their Techno-Animal project that's due out on Virgin Worldwide. And Kevin's other project, Ice, which features Justin Broadrick, Dave Cochrane, and Alex Buss, will be releasing remixes from the album *UNDER THE SKIN* on Jason Pettigrew's local Cleveland-based label, Carcassh. Obviously all the individuals in God are bursting with creativity; enough to have all these projects flowing out, right and left.

It was when Kevin Martin was booking the Mule Club at Brixton's Canterbury Arms that all these people sort of found each other. Kevin tried to support himself and his band God while booking the likes of Carcass, Pulp, Coil, Extreme Noise Terror; bands that have no place to play in Great Britain. According to Kevin, he had to stop working at the Mule Club, because "the owner of the club and I almost killed each other at one point."

Then Kevin set out to form his own label, Pathological, where he put together a compilation (in 1989) of the above-mentioned acts, plus Godflesh, God and others. I had thought he had started the label primarily to release his own projects, but he says, "No, totally the opposite. I put together a compilation of groups that were doing something different at the time." It wasn't until after the *BREACH BIRTH* Ep

that came out in 1990 on Beggars Banquet that God became a ten-piece band. "The history of God is in two parts. Up until that point, we were compared to stuff like The Butthole Surfers, and I don't even like them!" He then added more players; people with a mutual love of electric jazz, hard-core and hip-hop, to create something far more extreme than most people have ever heard. The band went on to record a live album called *LOCO* in 1991 (released on P.D.C.D.) and in 1992, did another major label stint with *POSSESSION* on Venture/Virgin. Another live disc, *CONSUMED*, was released in 1993, but back on an indie label (again) called Sentrax. Currently, God is on Big Cat Records.

With a ten-piece band, one has to wonder how the recording process takes place. Who and what comes first? Laughing, Kevin responded with, "The people or the songs? The chicken or the egg? There's been a different approach with each album. Song-wise, there's four or five of us—two drummers, two bass players and myself that work on the spine of the songs. The others will come to rehearsals whenever they can."

"Obviously, you'll only hear 60-70% of what was actually recorded," he continued. "Some stuff gets dropped out while other things get brought up in the mix. God songs are the hardest I've ever mixed in my life."

And finally, with the Ice remixes still pending release, I had to ask. So how did you hook up with that crazy Jason Pettigrew anyhow? "It was basically from him being so enthusiastic about the Ice album. It's like a shot in the arm when someone like Jason comes along. He is acting as our agent, so to speak. I'm looking for a record deal for Ice; it's not worth it to put another out myself. I'd rather have a label pay for it."

And why won't Big Cat pick up Ice? "I really haven't taken it to them. Plus there's been long discussions and debates over God stuff. I'm not very happy when people in London ask how they can get a copy of the God album."

THE ANATOMY OF ADDICTION is now available in the U.S. through Relativity Distribution. But if you're having trouble finding it, or you can't find other related projects like Ice, Techno-Animal, E.A.R., 16-17, or Terminal Cheesecake, Kevin said you can write to him at Pathological; B.C.M. Box 1079, London WC1N 3XX. He'll be glad to assist. And those of you who are interested in being part of the Committee For God America Tour, contact Derek Hess, Jason Pettigrew or myself.