

# NOISE POLLUTION

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## MARK ABROMAVAGE

### JERKIN' A KNOT IN YOUR ASS.

The man behind the sound of **Kinghorse** speaks about his days with some of Louisville's most legendary bands.

#### Who influenced you to start playing guitar?

If I had to blame somebody it would be my brother. He's a bass player. Of course he played on the Fading Out record. He gave me that acoustic right there. I've had that since I was 16. I took a steak knife and widdled out the nut and I've had it ever since. After a while it just became habit. I wanted to learn so bad. Its always been something I wanted. I didn't really have anything else to kill time.

#### That was your first band wasn't it? Fading Out?

Yeah. At first we called it Malignant Growth. Malignant Growth was a lot harder edged than Fading Out. It was basically the same band, but we had lost the original drummer and the original singer. The other singer was.... Well, neither one of them could really sing a lick (laughter) They were just good frontmen. We had a drummer. He left and went to Boston out of the clear blue and the singer went to Oklahoma. The drummer went and auditioned for Gang Green. They told him he was too big of a drunk.

#### Too big of a drunk for Gang Green? (laughter)

That's how bad he was. The other singer, he was running from the law or something.

#### Kenny Ogle?

Yeah, he's a nut. Me and him started it. Then we talked my brother into it. The drummer, we bought his set for like \$125. Like a Royce or something really cheesy. When it was all said and done he had beer cans holding the tom up to keep it from dragging on the bass drum. We were a pretty poor band to say the least.

We went to Blue Moon a while back and Mike B. played one of the

M.G. demos. He talked about how he had wanted to do a 7" of it.

Actually its on an album. I think its called the Master Tapes. I think I've got a copy of it. We recorded 6 songs and they used 3 of them. The guy that actually produced it was one of the Zero Boys. He had a studio up there. It was pretty happening.

#### What's the story on M.G.'s famed "super set"?

We kinda stole that from the Beatles actually. Somebody told us once that on one of their albums the ending note of one song is the beginning note of the next. So we figured out how to do that and would end up playing 10 songs in a row before we'd stop. I think it was drug induced. (laughter)

#### We have always heard that the Growth would blow away all the big punk bands of the time like Minor Threat, Circle Jerks, etc.....

Yeah, we had our days. When we would play with big name acts we would always have our shit together. I think we always gave them a run for their money. Anytime a big name act would come to town they'd always try to get us to play with them. We played with Circle Jerks 2 or 3 times, D.O.A. probably 2 or 3 times, Minor Threat twice, Black Flag... We were gonna open for Bad Brains, but I was in jail. I think we held our own. We played with the Necros. We fucked up their world. We threw that super set on 'em. They didn't know what happened. (laughter)

#### What are the differences that you can see in the Louisville scene today and that of the M.G. era?

The crowds are not really any younger, its just more multitudes of them. It used to be that if you had 25 or 50 people at a show it was great. I was just listening to a tape of us a little while ago, like '81 or '82, and we'd just like play a minute and a half song at breakneck speed and there'd be barely a clap at the end of it. (laughter) I don't really know if anything has changed. It would be hard to put a finger on it. Well, its a lot more violent these days. Back in the old days, I mean hell they used to pogo. Then it got to be slam dancing which wasn't really slamming. It was more like bumping. We had violent shows, but nothing like... The perpetual stage diving which is just a pain in the dick. I think its great that kids are enthused about it. Its just aggravating to share the stage with (stage divers) especially when there is a total disregard for equipment and shit like that. When we do shows, you can just watch the reaction on people's faces in the crowd who are either getting pummeled from the backside or just having people jump on top of them. I mean, its not happy faces. A lot of people aren't there to be dove upon or used as pillows. If I'm going to

be up front by the stage, which I very seldom did because its kinda asking for it. If somebody pushed me, I'll give 'em that. A little out of control you know, but if you do it again, I'm gonna floor 'em. (laughter)

**Some people out there are looking to start a fight. They think that's what you are there for. To get a few hits in on somebody.**

We, as a band, in the old days... We were all big boys, except for the drummer. But you know, you can't find a fat drummer... that's about as rare as hen's teeth. We packed about an 800-900 pound front-line just the 3 of us. (laughter) And all our friends were big boys from the South End. We'd go up to Cincinnati and we'd get reviews in all these zines and they'd be like, "Well, uh, Malignant Growth played and brought their hardcore army with them." They'd fuck everybody up. (laughter)



I was reading something the other day and they were talking about all these kids from the South End being this and being that. But man, we were from the South End a long time ago. We introduced the South End to the East End. At first, it wasn't a happy union. There was a lot of players that came out of there (the South End). Like Cinderblock or Evergreen. Those guys were from out there. Sean (Garrison) grew up out in Sylvania. Our drummer came from out there by Greenwood and East Pages. It's always been there.

**It seems more of a challenge getting into punk or whatever when you live in the South End as opposed to the East End where its almost the status quo and where there is a culture or network that supports it.**

Yeah. When it comes to the point where being so different can cause you to be an outcast and be pushed aside, I think it shows something. I got kicked out of Butler (High School) before I was 16 for wearing those shirts looking like Ozzy used to wear. (laughter) When you go to that extreme its a rough road to follow. (laughter) You see I was lucky. I was a big boy. "Just leave the silent big fucker alone and maybe he'll go on."

**As far as Kinghorse goes, were there any cities that were as responsive as Louisville was to your stuff?**

Actually, Cleveland. We hooked up with Face Value. They had a pretty good draw out there. They always made it worth our while when we came through. The last show we played up there...Face Value opened, Endpoint, then us, then Slapshot. Endpoint ran into technical difficulties. Duncan (Barlow) was trying to get his amp working. Finally, they asked me and I let him borrow mine. They drove 6 hours and got to play about 10 minutes. We (Kinghorse) had been under a lot of stress because we had been pretty brutal to each other. We had differences. We had went up and saw the label (Caroline) and found out that we needed to have been back at home getting our shit together as far as new material. We fought pretty hard up in Boston, then we played Syracuse... We finally got it resolved in Cleveland. We were like, "Fuck yeah, let's do this show and go the fuck home." So we were excited. We played our set, tore 'em a new asshole, packed up our shit and was gone. Surprisingly enough, (Slapshot) got signed to the label that we tried to get signed up with.

**What label was that?**

Century Media. It's the same label My Own Victim is on.

**What was it that they told you about your material?**

I'm not sure if its word for word. But what it boiled down to was our songwriting was weak and the singer's voice grated on his nerves. (laughter) All we were wanting was a free trip to Europe or a big advance so I could buy a house. We were either too punk rock for England or too metal for the States or vice versa. That was a lot of the problem we had with Caroline. They didn't know how to market us.

**Are there any Kinghorse shows that stand out as being a personal favorite?**

Actually the one in Cleveland was a real good one. It seems like we had a real good show up in Louisville Gardens. I think it was the first one that we did up there. A lot of the early shows at the laser tag place, but those were so cramped. I got a video of one of our early shows down here at Tewigans. Sean's wearing like a Tom Jones vest, his hair is only about this long and all curly. (laughter) I think it was back when the drummer used to play the cymbal back behind his head. We thought that was so cool. (laughter) He'd be like "POW!" We'd be like "YEAH!" (laughter). We played with (Shelter) in Tampa. This big Krishna van pulled up out front. So the rest of the band goes out and gets chicken and eats it right out there in the hallway with them. Those guys were so pissed off. We got paid \$100 to play this show and they were raising hell about it. "The way I see it we took Kinghorse to fucking dinner!" The crowd thought they were supposed to like us, but the longer we played the bigger the space got between us and the crowd. (laughter) Actually the bass player and the guitar player came out and watched. They thought it was good. They were decent people, but you know your boy, Ray... It wasn't long that they came and played at the Bar With No Name over on Frankfurt Ave. They said, "Yeah, we're heading up North, up your way" and we're like "Oh Yeah?" (laughter) We were gonna go and fuck with them. (laughter)

**We always talk about that show that closed the Skate Park. It was unreal. There were so many people there that you couldn't even see the band.**

Yeah. We furnished the PA, we furnished the soundman. I wound up working the door. We released the "Going Home" single that day. We made a considerable amount of money that night. It was kind of a good show and kind of not. Nobody could really hear. The Fire Marshall came in and was like "Hey, don't let any more people in here." Finally, he took off and I started letting people back in. Then it was like "Time to set up, Mark." The door was left wide open. Anyone that showed up late could just walk right in. That was a hell of a night, that's for sure.

**We heard you guys were pretty rude to the people at the Foundations Forum convention in California back in 1990. Like the people who would try to give you guitar strings, etc....**

We'd lay on the floor and go into convulsion fits. Just all kinds of stupid shit. You know, people would come over and pick up the tape (Kinghorse's Caroline album), "Oh! Produced by Glenn Danzig!" and we were like... They gave away like a thousand copies of the tape, but it didn't have the cover on it yet. And just because it was produced by Glenn Danzig, that was the selling point.

**So you pretty much freaked everyone out at the Foundations Forum?**

I think so. There weren't too many people there. Glenn showed up for our show. But you could read in a lot of the press that came out after (the Forum). "These guys didn't want to be here and you could tell."

**Do you think your ties with Danzig was the reason why you got picked up by Caroline in the first place.**

Well, how the story goes is Glenn heard our demo. Mike and Rat used to write him or something. Or Rat used to be good friends with him and Mike, because of the Maurice connection, when they did a couple of dates with Samhain on the November Coming Fire tour. Then there was another guy, Mike Gitter, who writes for all these prominent music magazines. And he saw it (the first Kinghorse demo). And he kept saying (to Danzig), "man, you gotta do something with these guys." So that was basically the reason why they picked us up. Because if you here the demo, I guess the middle set of songs on the CD (*Too Far Gone* on Slamdek), like "Fourth Step" and "Awaken." I mean "Awaken" is probably a good song, but some of that other stuff is just... I mean the sound, and its like why in the fuck would you (want to sign us). As compared to the apartment demos or the stuff done at Mom's (demos for their second album on Caroline that never materialized), to me that stuff is a lot more refined. You can look at that and say there's no much more that's going to be needed for those. But they (Caroline) still said, well, you need more music. Just because the first album is only like 29 minutes long, they wanted the next one to be a fucking epic. It had to be over 45 minutes long. We had it, but I think they knew they were in trouble as far as the label goes. Supposedly, they had come up with a whole slew of bands while they were in the process of getting rid of us. I think they were still dealing with Smashing Pumpkins, Monster Magnet, and Hole. There was like a whole shitload of people that were up and coming, so they didn't even need to deal with us.

We had a guy on the label, and I wish I had kept them, but he used to send us 8X10 glossies of all these bands and we would draw big dicks on them and mail them back to him. (laughter) We did all sorts of stupid shit like that. We'd go up to visit the label and I mean work stopped. They would be like, "man, you have got to get these guys out of here." See they made one guy our buddy at the label. Well, we kind of made him our buddy. But every time we'd go to New York we stayed at his place. A couple of times Caroline even gave him the day off just so he wouldn't bring us up there. (laughter) Once we had to go and wait outside this place (Caroline's office building). It was fairly chilly and we were sitting out on the street corner. Mike had like a coffee cup with a couple of pennies and a rock n roll button in it and he's jingling it. Well here comes this blonde walking by, and the big thing in New York is that you need change for a slice of pizza. That's what all the bums want. So Mike was like "Change for a slice of pizza" and this girl looks at him and reaches down, pulls out a dollar and puts it in the cup. We started laughing and Rat was like "He was fucking with you." She got mad and yanked her dollar back and went up into the Caroline building. It wasn't a little bit later that our buddy from the label comes down and was like "Hey man, did you all see Courtney Love?" "Whoops! Yeah, we did." Man, she got pissed. This was before Hole was even thought of.

We'd call up the label and always ask for this guy (Chris MacDermott, their label buddy). But we would always act like we were Henry Rollins or Glenn Danzig. He would always know it was one of us. (deep voice with cheesy accent) "I need to talk to Chris MacDermott." "Who's calling?" "This is Glenn Danzig." He'd be like, "What's up, fuckers." (laughter)

**How did Rollins go?**

Kind of the same. (laughter)

**That sounds about right.**

We stayed at his (MacDermott) apartment one night and the band went through the personal ads in the Village Voice and gave out this guy's home phone number and his office number. We'd call up all the gay and lesbian ads. After so many local calls they charge you. It was like 135 local calls. So we had to pay for that. And then we talked his secretary into putting all those phone calls through. It would be like gay bands needing a keyboard player. We just loved pranking him. (We also called) the head of the label (Caroline). We called your boy at about 2:00 in the morning. We told him we were gonna spank his bottom. Man, we got an ass chewin' the next day. (laughter)

**We were watching this video the other night of Kinghorse at the Toy Tiger last year (Jan. 14, 1996). It was pretty funny. Jerry**

**(Cunningham) was kicking these guys that were running across the stage.**

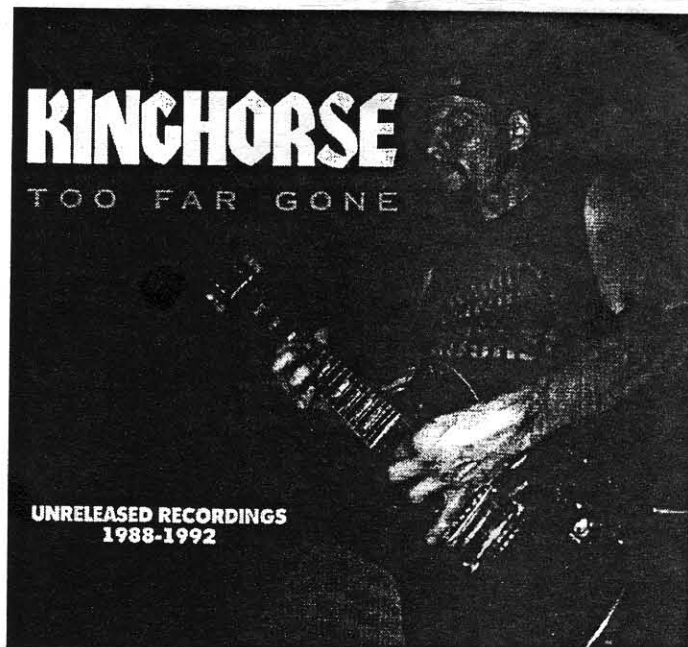
He's lucky somebody didn't jump up there and jerk a knot in his ass. (laughter) We always kid around and call him Evil McNasty. Because he gets that demented look about him. Scowling, pacing. When him and Sean go at each other... I've seen them punch each other. I thought, "Uh oh, here we go. Big fight in the band." Jerry's only like 19 or 20. We fucked him up for good. He'll never be the same again. When we take somebody out on the road with us, we torment them. Shame them to the point that they're pissed off.

**Is that some sort of initiation?**

It's just something to do. Nothing was ever purposely done. We drove up out of here one night, heading to New York. I worked all day, 10 hour day, get home, packed all the equipment up. This is like 11:00. I drive like 5-6 hours and then we switch up. And then I hear 'em, (whispers) "Oh man, should we get gas?" "Man, I don't think they even sell gas here." I'm like, "Oh, man..." (laughter) I wake up and we're in some Amish community. All the little girls are wearing the same type dresses and bonnets. The dads have got like hooks, they've lost their arms and shit in farming accidents. (laughter) I'm like, "Jesus Christ!" So I took back over the wheel. The thing is whoever sits in the passenger seat is supposed to be navigator and "watcher for the police" or whatever. So I look over and Jerry's playing Solitaire on a laptop computer. So I'm like, "Hey man, where's that turn-off?" He's like, "Huh?" So I look and we'd done past it. We were an hour out of our way. Between him and the fucking Amish community it was a nightmare. (laughter)

**What is happening with Kinghorse? Why did you call it quits?**

Well, the strange thing is we never really collectively got together and said its over. We did a big show at the Toy Tiger with the Jesus Lizard and that was pretty happening. Then we did a show a little while later at Butchertown and it was just a sparse gathering of people. I don't know if Butchertown is just on the outs with fans or what.



**We were pretty disappointed with the turnout. Kinghorse and Elliott seemed like a pretty strong bill.**

Surprisingly enough, they said that was probably the biggest turnout they've had in about a month. After that show, we were just like, "we'll take some time off" and everyone just went their separate ways. I think to this date, I have yet to talk to Sean. Jerry's playing in Last House on the Left, which is kinda the Jerry Cunningham Experience. Jerry Pandora is his stage name by the way, he hates it. Kevin is doing the studio thing at

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Melody Hill. I personally... it became a pain in the dick more than anything. Get off from work, race home, 45 minutes to shit, shine, and shave and be ready for them to come over and practice. I think we're all basically lazy fuckers. We made some bad choices and it left a bad taste in everybody's mouth. From the hey day of playing out in Fairdale and getting the plug pulled 6 songs into the set. From shows like that that were actually fun to shows where you just play your fucking heart out and no one really gives a shit. Actually the last Butchertown show even though there wasn't a wealth of activity going on, we still had a good time. Sean and Kevin were pretty funny. I just think everybody was pretty tired of it. The name Kinghorse has such an albatross on its back. Its either "Oh yeah, you guys are the ones who just about closed down the Brewery and got the bouncers kicked out the back door or started riots."

### **Those bouncers (at the Slamdek Blowout) had it coming.**

I could tell just watching them. They had an attitude. They were all gearing up, ready to run rough-shot over some little kids. I saw those sons of bitches back there wearing the work boots. Big ol' tall drink of water back there and some kinda "Italian Stallion." (laughter) The next thing you know, BOOM!, the back door's kicking open, everybody's trying to fight their way out. And that thing down at the Cherokee, that crazy bastard. He wanted us to play a show, it was like a 60/40 split with him and we pay for the soundman and the opening bands, too. We were like "You're fucking crazy." That bastard had tickets on sale at Earxtacy in advance. I think he pocketed all that money. I don't know, but I wouldn't put it past him. He's crazy.

And then you have reviews in the Burt and the Hard Times, right after the show at the Tiger. You get little snotty-nosed kids writing reviews of

shows. I don't want people to kiss my ass, but call the show like it is. For them to say that we planted some ignorant fuck up in front of the crowd just so he could get tossed out. I mean how fucking ridiculous can you be. They bad mouth my band, but then they say that this band (is good) just because they happen to write for the same magazine. That is total bootlicking, buttkissing,...Somebody needs to slap them in the face or throw water on them or something. They need to wake up.

### **Are there any bands that have impressed you over the last few years.**

Actually the last band that I heard that I thought could go anywhere, that I was kinda impressed with; they split up that night. One of the guys from the Pennies old band...Lather. They had real commercial potential and I don't mean that in a bad way. Good song structure, real melodic. I was impressed. Other than that I haven't really been out to see anybody.

### **What have you taken away from all your experiences over the years.**

I guess all the touring and seeing a lot of places that I wouldn't normally see. That was worth all the effort I think. That's something I'll take with me I guess. I've probably done more in that span of 18 years...like playing with all the big names that people now could only hope to get a reissue T-shirt from. That I've actually been there and experienced it.

**Thanks to the following people for their assistance:** Sean Severs (May the Horse be with you), Mark Abromavage, and Mike Seymour. **Congratulations** to Chris and Heather McCormick on the birth of their beautiful son Dayton.