

TIME HAS COME TODAY?

THE DOGS

(Detroit/L.A.)



By Marsh Gooch

IF EVER THERE WAS A BAND THAT STRADDLED THE PUNK/ROCK fence, **THE DOGS** [no relation to the French band *The Dogs* that *Steve Gardner* interviewed last issue—ed.] were it. Not quite exploding out of the late '60s Detroit scene, the band played raw rock 'n' roll that came too late to fit into The MC5/Stooges era, and too early to be called punk. Yet, The Dogs—**LOREN MOLINARE** on guitar and vocals, **MARY KAY** on bass, and "the" **RON WOOD** on drums—could be called either punk or rock with hindsight. Their songs were equal parts both, from the straightahead "JOHN Rock 'n' Roll **SINCLAIR**" to the more out there "Slash Your Face," with oddball stops in between ("Black Tea," covers like "Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl") and enough DIY attitude to really kick out the jams (in the literal sense). Somehow, things never really clicked, and by 1987 they had broken up—and then things started to happen. Their songs showed up on bootleg punk compilations such as *Killed by Death*, their singles were selling for big money on Ebay, and in 2000, a collection of singles and live tracks came out on Dionysus. It's now 2003 and *Suburban Nightmare*, an album with all new studio material, has been unleashed, also on Dionysus. Perhaps The Dogs' time has finally come?

[Disclaimer: It should be noted that the interviewer for this story is currently playing with **LOREN DOG** in **THE 'LECTRIC CHAIRS**, and has co-written songs with Loren appearing on The Dogs' new release. Beyond that, however, he's obviously a long-time Dogs follower, which makes him the right person to do this history-minded interview for *The Big Takeover*. We couldn't have done better ourselves.]

MG: When did The Dogs get started?

LOREN: In tenth grade [1968]. We couldn't figure out other people's tunes so we started writing our own songs, singing about love, broken hearts—shit that we had never even experienced yet. Then we put an ad out. Mary answered it and came down and jammed with us. She had this puffed out hair, flaming orange, **LUCILLE BALL** meets **JIMI HENDRIX**, and she was playing like **JACK BRUCE** of **CREAM**. And we didn't think she'd come back. We thought she would think we were a bunch of dipshits.

MG: What kind of tunes were you into at that early stage?

LOREN: We did a blues in G, some **MC5**-flavored riffs. It was Mary who brought in **THE STOOGES**' "I Want to Be Your Dog" and said, "Check this out." We started playing frat parties, kegger-type things, free concerts in the park, stuff like that. Then we got to open for **THE FROST**, a band **DICK WAGNER** had... He ended up playing with **LOU REED** and **ALICE COOPER**. Dick took The Dogs to Detroit and we did our first gigs down there with **BROWNSVILLE STATION** [of "Smokin' in the Boys Room" fame], **THE RATIONALS**, and we opened for **THE MC5** when *Back in the USA* came out.

MG: That must've been a pretty big gig. When did Ron Wood come into the band?

LOREN: Ron joined in early '71, **ART [PHELPS]**, original drummer] quit in late '70. Ron was a real juvenile delinquent, a hoodlum, so he fit right in. And he played great. He really got that whole Stooges/MC5/**BLUE CHEER** thing.

MG: What else shaped your sound?

LOREN: It was a combination of things. Mary was listening to a lot of Motown stuff, Ron loved the psychedelic stuff, and **BLACK SABBATH**, too. I was enamored with the whole Detroit music

thing. **THE AMBOY DUKES** was the first turn-on, then I experienced The Stooges and The MC5. They were coming to my high school...

MG: They would actually let a group like MC5 come to play?

LOREN: They were supposed to, and my band teacher botched the concert. We brought in *Kick Out the Jams* and he saw the liner notes and that was it. [What, "Dope, guns, and fucking in the street?" Harmless!—ed.] But, the driving beat, and the wiggling guitars, and the whole thing about The MC5 really captured my imagination and gave me the balls to go out and think that it could be done by me, by my band.

MG: The band moved to New York in '73.

LOREN: We'd always heard about places like Max's Kansas City [on Park Ave.], and one day Ron says, "Let's go to New York," and the next thing you know, we hit the streets of Manhattan. We didn't know what was going on there, but we found out real quick.

MG: How'd you find out?

LOREN: Flyers. First day in Manhattan, "Kiss at the Diplomat Hotel," August of '73. We were so naive, we went up to the Diplomat and I asked **PAUL STANLEY** if we could play, and he says, "Who in the hell do you think you are? You can't just pop in here and think you're gonna play." Ultimately they liked us and we got to do some shows with them. One time they had played a gig out in Amityville, on Long Island, and they said "If you go pick our gear up we'll let you play with us," so it sounded like a fair deal.

THE [NEW YORK] DOLLS were happening then, too, and we met **THE DICTATORS** and started doing gigs with them. Out of all the bands in New York, The Dictators, we felt, were the closest to us. They weren't glam, they weren't wearing makeup, they were writing great songs, playing loud, wearing jeans... it was just kick-ass rock 'n' roll.

MG: How long were you in New York?

LOREN: That time, about three months, and then we bailed, we just couldn't keep it together there. We went back to Detroit for the winter, and then came back to Manhattan and hung out for four or five months. We met **DEBBIE HARRY** and **CHRIS STEIN** and their [pre-**BLONDIE**] band, **THE STILETTOS**. By that time, [1974's] *Too Much Too Soon* came out by The Dolls.

MG: Had you put anything out yet?

LOREN: No, we hadn't gotten that far.

MG: So the next move is?

LOREN: Bailed out of New York, went back to Michigan, and then, in April of '75 went to Florida on an ill-fated tour. Ron ended up quitting the band after we had been fired by various clubs for playing too loud and fast. We broke up in Orlando. Ron stayed down there, and Mary and I and the rest of the crew made it to Hollywood [California, not Florida].

MG: No stop back in Detroit? Just, "Screw it, we're going to L.A.?"

LOREN: We ended up bumming gas money from whoever to get there. Ron came out once we got established. Neither the Whisky nor Starwood were booking local bands then. We had met **THE MOTELS** and got to be friends with them, and through them we met this band called **THE POP**, and the three bands had this common mindset, even though they were totally different. We put a gig on at this place called Trooper's Hall, and that was the start of the so-called new wave. *Billboard* wrote about it—about 500 people showed up and after that the Whisky and the Starwood started booking us, because we proved there was a scene.

MG: Then The Dogs finally put out a record.

LOREN: Yeah, we had a manager then and he suggested we put out a 45, and **RODNEY [BINGENHEIMER]**, legendary KROQ DJ had his show, so we went and did a four-track recording of "John Rock 'N' Roll Sinclair" and "Younger Point of View." At **THE DAMNED's** [1977] debut at the Starwood I went up to Rodney and gave him our record. The next Sunday night he started spinning "John Rock," and that started a roll for us on KROQ. They started doing shows at the Bel-Air Sands hotel, with bands like **THE QUICK**. The thing that was so cool was that all the bands were different. Then the English punk thing started happening, and L.A. got a little more punk. All of the sudden you had a lot of these Southern California punk bands, **THE WEIRDOS** and **THE GERMS**, playing the Masque, and that was a great thing because it gave a lot of these people a chance in life. You didn't have to be a model or a movie star to fit in. You didn't have to play very well, either—it was all attitude. But The Dogs got caught in the middle. We played our instruments too well for the punkers, and we were too Detroit for the normal hard rockers to understand.

MG: Did you ever play the Masque?

LOREN: We played there once. But by then we were already considered too mainstream. I was walking down

Hollywood Blvd. just alienated by the whole thing, and came up with "Slash Your Face," you know, "You think you're the master race/Well, slash your face." It was an even more alienating statement [than anything the "punkers" had made].

MG: It was a "fuck you" to the punk scene.

LOREN: But what is punk? Punk says "fuck you" to the establishment.

MG: The punkers were becoming the establishment in their own sort of way.

LOREN: Right. We couldn't get arrested in Los Angeles, and I knew somebody in London who was going to set up an English tour. But we needed product out, so we put out that three-song EP of "Slash Your Face," "Fed Up," and "Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?" in November of '78, and went to London. We were there for two-and-a-half months, and then the backing pulled out. We were



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squatting all over North London; we thought we were gonna play gigs and tour Europe. We had sold everything in L.A. because we didn't think we were gonna come back. We came back to L.A. and tried to get it going again, changed our name to **ATTACK**, and did a single with a girl singer. By this time Ron had left again, and we had a new drummer, **TONY MATTEUCCI**, so Mary and I and Tony put something out [Attack's *Uptown Thinkin'* 12" EP on Hotline]. When that came out, people in Europe started writing me about The Dogs, that "Slash Your Face" was being bought as an import single, which I thought was weird. So we ended up going back to The Dogs, trying to get a major record deal and writing more songs. We almost got signed to Atlantic, but by that time I joined **LITTLE CAESAR**, Caesar got signed to Geffen, and that was the end of that version of The Dogs. Eventually **LEE JOSEPH** [owner of Dionysus Records] convinced us to do the *Fed Up* compilation [2000]. We got back together with drummer **KEN MUNDY** to play the record release party, and then I got bit by the bug. All of the sudden there was a whole new generation of kids who got into The Dogs, and it was amazing to play to them. We went out and did several shows around L.A. after that.

MG: People flew in from all over to see you play.

LOREN: Yeah. Then in June of 2002, Ron came out to L.A., so we put together a gig at a rehearsal studio in North Hollywood and played to a bunch of our friends and stuff. Playing with Ron again was magic. It was like we had gotten better over time. Ron flew back home and we continued doing shows with a couple of different drummers, Ken Mundy or **STEVE DARROW**. We were gonna play the L.A. Shakedown in February of 2003 with Ron, so we thought, here's an opportunity to make another record. Of course, there's no money, there's no time, and there's no budget, but we're

gonna do a record. That was always the way The Dogs worked anyway. Just get together the bare minimum you needed to go and do something. We had to make it happen. Each night we had to cut four songs, and I just prayed to God that it was gonna happen.

MG: And it almost didn't get finished.

LOREN: I wasn't feeling that great at the Shakedown gig in February, and I had a feeling there was something wrong with me. I ended up having triple bypass surgery! So here's an unfinished Dogs record with Loren Dog almost not making it through that.

MG: What were you thinking while you were recovering?

LOREN: After the operation I realized it meant more to me than ever to finish the record. On **IGGY**'s birthday, five weeks after the surgery, I went in to cut my guitar tracks. I wasn't even ready—I could hardly pick up my guitar—but I thought, since it was Iggy's birthday, it'll be all right. I went in there and started laying guitar tracks down for the next two days. It was like, "Fuck yeah, this is rock 'n' roll, do or die." I couldn't sing for another few weeks, so over a six-week period we got it done.

MG: And you're pretty happy with it? [*Suburban Nightmare*]

LOREN: It sounds like the Dogs, it *is* the Dogs, and it's 2003. I could die tonight, and I would leave a rockin' record that I think says it all! ☆