

The Crowd

Letter Bomb (Flipside)

by Jon Sarre

Old punks never die, they just get the band back together. Then they're about as welcome around the scuzzy club circuit as a pack of junkie in-laws. In most cases (the Circle Jerks, Fear, 7 Seconds, and the Damned instantly come to mind), it makes me wonder why they even bother. Wouldn't you get sick and tired of drunk "fans" telling you, "Hey, I thought you were dead, faggot!" Death, in fact, is often the only way to permanently kill off some of these bands - that's why the smart money says no big summer Germs tour (although losing a co-vocalist/songwriter to an OD didn't stop Flipper from reforming a few years back. That's about as shameless as it gets. I won't even mention that Sex Pistols thing).

On the other hand, there's the odd exception where the old guys actually have something to *say*, rather than simply something to *sell*. File **The Crowd** into this category. On their new Flipside release, *Letter Bomb*, they consistently prove themselves to be masters of melodic chock full o'harmonies punk rock, kinda like what the Buzzcocks used to do (not surprisingly, the Crowd covers "Time's Up" and "Love You More" by the aforementioned band).

As original songwriters, the Crowd's principle team of singer Jim Decker and guitarist Jim Kaa aren't too shoddy themselves. Lotsa cuts reference old friends or lovers, some dead, some gone straight; they even question some of the choices they made when they thought they knew it all and repeatedly ask why that stuff still doesn't make any sense now that they're older (and wiser?). This is also a band unafraid to call out some of the newer sensations who don't acknowledge the debts they owe the first- and second-generation punks. On "Run For the Money," Decker claims that all he really wants "is a moment in the sun," but he feels stuck behind the crush of people who rush through the door his band helped to open. Decker, Kaa, bass player Jay Decker and drummer Dennis Walsh probably know that their attitudes are all wrong for mega-stardom, but that's why they remain in the Crowd.

