

Don't you hate when you really get into a new band or certain disc-cranking it up every chance you get, blasting it down the highway on your way home from work, and just grooving on that feeling that although the elements are all familiar, this group is grinding it out in a new and exciting way-and then some jerk-off breaks into your car and steals your stereo, with the new cd in the deck!?! How fucked up is that?! God, I just hate people. No respect at all for the working man. And it wasn't some \$500 Blaupunkt or Alpine we're talking about either; it was a cheapo, bottom of the line JVC. Cost me \$150 (+\$100 installation from those rip-off bitches at Best Buy). But still, not only am I out \$250, but I also lost this excellent cd of what can only be described as shit-kicking punk rock action.

Above all, this album rocks the house in a way that at once typifies all that is America; beer-swilling, country-twang, hard-hitting, loud guitars...and a singer who knows his way around a Lemmy howl. At times reminiscent of everything you've ever heard and completely original, Grafton buries riffs deep into your psyche and then digs them out with a spork. This is guitar rock the way no one in *Guitar Player* or *Spin* can remember how to play it. —Kevin Chanel, *Chin Music*

Fuckin' awesome blues rock with more guts being displayed here than Mick Foley's 1998 "King Of The Ring" match against the Undertaker. Great recording with bucket-loads of energy. With rock being the flavour of the month for major labels and radio, it's very cool to hear bands as energetically charged as Grafton kicking ass when the industry is filled with bands who wannabe but will never quite be cos they simply lack 'it'. Grafton are bringing life back to the term 'kick out the jams' and thank fuck for that. I love this album and these guys will not get away lightly. They have explaining to do and I think an interview with them is in order. Two thumbs up, 10 out of fuckin' 10, baby! —Damo, *Long Gone Loser*

This Columbus act, which started out in 1996 as a two-piece but added a full-time bass player in '99, hopped off the rock-duo bandwagon just when everyone else started climbing on. Their new *Blind Horse Campaign* (Dead Canary) has a huge, heavy sound that any five-piece might envy: it's part AC/DC, part Soundgarden when they were fresh, part stiff-legged, headbanging Zep worship, and part evidence for the theory that lots of punk bands started out secretly wishing they could play metal. —Monica Kendrick, *Chicago Reader*

Loud and angry contemporary American garage-punk (in that thrown-together blues music, '60s Detroit, '70s metal, '80s hardcore and Estrus '90s garage kinda-vein). There's some variation in attack, although you won't find any Beach Boys harmonies here. A little like The Mono Men (or even The White Stripes meanest moments)... exposure to this disc is good for cleaning the ear wax, that's for sure... and this sound is very much in vogue right now. If 'nu-garage' fires you up, this will. —Jon 'Mojo' Mills, *Shindig*

Grafton, who, despite being named after a town in West Virginia, hail from Columbus, Ohio, have had their noses to the grindstone for several years now-hitting the road several times a year for arduous road trips-and it shows on their second full-length. *Blind Horse* captures the hard-as-nails sound the band has honed playing gin joints from Brooklyn to Bellingham. The mix of overdriven amps, lean and tight playing and singer Lou POSTER'S gravelly vocals gives new meaning to the term "power trio." There is hardly space to take a breath on the record's first five tracks, which are highlighted by the fourth cut, "Sumbitch," that meshes a distinctly Midwest point-of-view with ferocious playing. Few bands capture the dirt and sweat of their hard work on record, but Grafton has done exactly that, creating a mighty din in the process. —Stephen Slaybaugh, *The Big Takeover*

Grafton has quickly become my favorite band. Last year's debut on Deraileur Records accompanied me on all my road trips, and I gave it a 4 out of 5 Sponics when I reviewed it. Now here they are with their follow-up, their sophomore effort, albumo numero two-o. And baby, sweet honey doll, it kicks righteous ass!

*Blind Horse Campaign* is so damned exciting and fun, it's a crime it ain't on every radio station coast to coast. "I've Been Lookin'" is a hot rod, tires screeching on black top, barreling off into the night. "Sumbitch" is the wrong drunk to fuck

with, and you just fucked with him! "The Day They Ran Us Out Of Town" is pretty damn self explanatory, ain't it?

Music has rarely been this good since Willie, Waylon and the boys kicked Nashville in the balls, or since The Sex Pistols imploded in hippy town. Grafton are real honest-to-God working class country punks who will put a boot in your ass if you ain't having a good time! But how could you not have a good time?! Grafton is it, baby! -**Tim Murr, *Sponic***

**Grafton - *Blind Horse Campaign*** (CD, **Dead Canary** Hard rock)

Direct, throbbing, extremely hard rock. This Columbus, Ohio trio doesn't get bogged down with the more trivial aspects of making music...instead opting to simply belt out their intense tunes like there's no tomorrow. While the basic ingredients may be familiar (guitar, bass, drums)...the guys in **Grafton** make the whole genre sound vital and new again. This is a case where talent and intent change everything. These three guys obviously love what they're doing...and they are damn good at it. Despite the fact that the tunes on *Blind Horse Campaign* (their second album) are abrasive and loud...these tracks never degenerate into generic noise. Instead, the band incorporates all kinds of smart moves into their hell raising craft. The guitars are loud and over the edge...the bass solid and intense...and the drummer is a crazy wild crasher. And you've just gotta love those ultra-masculine rough vocals. The band consists of **Lou Poster** (guitar, vocals), **Donovan Roth** (bass), and **Jason McKiernan** (drums). Excellent thrashy hard rock played with true conviction. (Rating: 5+) -*babysue*

**Grafton • *Blind Horse Campaign* • Dead Canary Records •** The last album jammed-out but this follow up to that self titled debut is even better. Steady delivering their brand of raw rawk from Ohio that carries on in a whiskey soaked rampage and small biker bar attitude is evident on tracks like "Pour Like It Rains" and "Sumbitch." What they've done on this disc is hammer down like a stock car on a dirt track and driven some dirty southern rock sounds to the Midwest with authority. - **J.C. Carnahan, *Impact Press***

The Cows rock out to Nashville Pussy. Loud, raucous and definitely worth a spin. -**Jimmy Alvarado, *Razorcake***

Fun, beer-swiggling, down-home r'n'r with blues-guitar licks, power-boogie twang and a major Mudhoney vibe. This is the kind of rock that makes you wonder why the White Stripes are so huge, when bands like these are working their asses off and sounding a lot better. -**Melissa Geils, *Punk Planet***

Grafton, *Blind Horse Campaign*

Bassholes, *Out In The Treetops*

(Dead Canary Records)

Dead Canary Records is een nieuw platenlabeltje uit Columbus, Ohio en zet zich middels twee uitstekende releases meteen op de kaart.

Grafton bracht eerder twee singles en een lp uit, maar hun tweede is voor ons de eerste kennismaking met dit trio uit Dead Canary hometown Columbus, en wat een verrassing schotelen ze ons voor. Treuren om het verscheiden van de eveneens uit Columbus, Ohio afkomstige New Bomb Turks hoeft niet langer, Grafton vult zonder moeite de achtergelaten leegte in. Van zodra de plaat inzet met het fantastische 'I've been lookin' zijn we verkocht aan het groovy en bluesy geluid van deze gasten. Ze zetten er namelijk meteen de beuk in, en als Lou Poster zijn schuurpapieren keelgat dan nog eens opentrekt, jawadde.

Wie nog regelmatig plaatjes van Mule of Laughing Hyenas onder de naald duwt, zal hier een schoon belegde boterham aan hebben. Rauw en melodisch tegelijk, meesters in het verhaspelen van de finale van elk nummer op de plaat, hier en daar wat gas terug nemend maar wel 11 nummers aan een stuk punkrockend zoals het hoort. Grafton kent dezelfde gedrevenheid als Nashville Pussy en Nine Pound Hammer, maar dan zonder de hardrockinvloeden, ze zijn een steviger versie van Bassholes of Gibson Bros en klinken als Doo Rag met echte instrumenten. Potverdorie, wat een dijk van een plaat. Het boogiegehalte kent zijn hoogtepunt als in 'The captain and big muskie' gastmuzikant Chris Burgett een piano mishandelt. 'Blind Horse Campaign' kent eigenlijk alleen maar hoogtepunten, dus die gasten moeten zo snel mogelijk naar hier worden gehaald. Klasse.

Een dubbelsingle, dat was al een tijdje geleden, en van Don Howland's band The Bassholes dan nog wel. Fervent liefhebber van die kleine vinylschijfjes als ik ben, prefereer ik uiteraard deze versie boven de cd-versie die binnenkort op de markt wordt gegooid, zeker gezien het feit dat beide formaten dezelfde zeven nummers bevatten. Don Howland is nooit ver van een opname in de psychiatrie verwijderd, zijn soloplaat 'Birdman' kan dat getuigen, maar gewoontegetrouw kan de man zijn kwelgeesten kwijt bij The Bassholes. De twintigste release van dit duo inmiddels, waardoor ze meteen kunnen worden bestempeld als zowat de grondleggers van de gitaar/drums-combinatie. The Black Keys kunnen weer naar huis, want de meester zelve is terug. Is opener 'Ode to Charo' eerder een nietig instrumentaaltje, waar live wellicht mee wordt geopend, 'Out in the treetops' behoort tot het beste wat het duo ooit op plaat heeft gezet. Howland zet een Iggy Pop neer zoals hij hoort te klinken, cool as hell en waar Iggy stekejalers op zou zijn als hij het nog zou kunnen, met een spooky tekst met lijnen als 'In my next live I decided I am living in your house', een scary movie waardig. En dat is slechts kantje één. 'Life goes on' op kant twee is een eigenzinnige versie van Joy Division's 'She's lost control', andere tekst maar muzikaal zijn er zeker raakvlakken. Ook hier straalt het optimisme er natuurlijk van af. Het derde kantje schotelt ons twee covers voor: 'Tattoo' van The Who en 'Raw Power' van The Stooges. Vooral de Stooges-cover is de moeite, en doet de chaos van het origineel alle eer aan, met medewerking van twee Grafton's komen ze tot een zeer geslaagd resultaat. 'Stack of Lee' en 'St. Matthew' sluiten het hemelse festijn af, in pure Bassholes-traditie. Alweer een klassieker toegevoegd aan hun immer uitdijende catalogus. Een must voor elke Jon Spencer, '68 Comeback en Cheater Slicks-adept. -Patrick Bruneal, *Gonzo Circus* (Belgium)

Here is some splintering rock'n'roll that you'll be picking out of your skin for days. These guys from Columbus, Ohio (virtually my backyard) have somehow evaded my radar for all things rockin' - and after hearing this I am all the more pissed off about that. The press sheet says they are for fans of Laughing Hyenas, Mudhoney, and Mono Men among others, which gives you something of an idea of their stripped down approach. They seem to have taken inspiration from blues (via John Spencer), hard rock, punk, and moonshine to come out with a fire-breathing progeny that will burn the skin off all the docile scene panderers. This CD is a pummeling assault on the senses that becomes impossible to listen to while sitting down. If you don't like this, then the spirit of rock-n-roll, is lost on you. -*Rock N Roll Purgatory*

#### Midwest Misfits

#### Three Ohio-based bands that give it all they got

By Matthew Wascovich  
Cleveland Free Times

The Bassholes, Grafton and This Moment in Black History - all of whom are on a July 18 bill at the Grog Shop -- are bizarre musical neighbors. The Ohio bands' music and personalities are the stuff of street freaks, and they share an affinity for nasty, discordant mutant rock so bad, it's good. Real good. If you can't take their not-much-to-live-for-other-than-rock-'n'-roll attitudes, second-hand clothes and loud instruments, then this isn't the show for you.

The Bassholes are the veterans of the bunch. Don Howland and Bim Thomas are a guitar and drum duo that kicks out crud rock. -- the kind of music that comes from the gutter. The kind of music you make when it's all you can do. Yes, the Bassholes precede the current two-piece hype by over a decade, but Thomas feels the duo's taken a more organic route.

"By homemade efforts, we have attracted our fans," he says. "From the first U.S. and European tours to most of our singles and LPs. People at any given point in time start to appreciate the band and as long as that continues to happen, I'm confident we'll stay together and continue to represent Midwestern rock. The all-in-it-together-pick-it-up-from-the-ground vibe is cool, but we have been at this for awhile."

As if to call out pretenders, Thomas adds, "At a time when the White Stripes success has prompted some real grade-A squares to start duos -- some I like, some I don't -- one thing I've realized is that all of these hot shot duos don't invite us to play. And we've played with a lot of the more well known ones, but they don't call anymore. Why? Are they afraid of being exposed?" Howland's past is legendary. Part self-described art fag, part Appalachian blues man, he's played in eminent bands such as Great Plains and Gibson Brothers, and has already made more great records than most produce in a lifetime. Yet, Howland soldiers on, and his Bassholes work is some of the best. If anyone should be a rock star, or at least able to make a living playing rock 'n' roll, it's Howland. However, he keeps it on the level -- not buying into marketing plans and

trendy bullshit, he continues to work as a teacher in an unfashionable town in North Carolina. He's currently in the midst of recording a full-length Bassholes album this summer, to be released on Columbus, Ohio's Dead Canary Records.

"A lot has happened since our last studio album *When My Blue Moon Turns Red Again*," Thomas says. "I believe Howland will be able to put down the usual brand of hard as nails lyrics, and I'm a better player on the tubs, so I'm anticipating our best album yet."

Formed in 1996, the guys in Grafton got together to play obnoxious, loud stripped-down rock because they loved bands like the Bassholes. Drummer Jason McKiernan was in the group Preston Furman at the time and lived in a duplex with singer and guitarist Lou Poster in a shitty neighborhood near the Ohio State campus.

"I had begun to lose interest in my band, and we were looking to piss off the pretentious bad haircut crowd we were seeing at shows," Poster says. "We thought loud, drunk, Led Zeppelin-inspired two-piece rock was the way to go."

Immediately, the group impressed, even if it lacked something in the low end department. "Bim Thomas came to most of our early shows and complained so much that we needed to 'gimme some bass, man' that Donovan Roth, who was pounding bass for Bob City at the time and working at Bernie's, the scene of most of those first experiments, offered to join up. In 1999, he did." With their three-piece in tact, Grafton set out to tour and record. They have criss-crossed the country a few times and, after this tour in support of their latest release, *Blind Horse Campaign*, and plan a third national tour this fall. When asked what motivates him and what ties his band to other Midwest bands, Poster says, "seems like there's a Midwest ethic that supports hard work in the face of adversity, a mindset that says 'this is what I've got, and if it doesn't go anywhere, it's still all I've got.' We're lifers, and we love what we do."

Poster adds, "in my case the work ethic definitely comes from my old man, who's a coal miner back in West Virginia, where I'm from. I've watched him work 50+ hours every week since I can remember and since I can't see myself in anything you'd call a 'career' path, this is where it comes out." One of the hottest new bands in Cleveland, This Moment in Black History, recently played a series of gigs opening for the Fall. They're currently developing their sound in their studio/rehearsal space called The Black Eye. Thomas, who pulls double-duty as drummer of both the Bassholes and TMIBH, illustrates the history of the band.

"The band started at a party," he says. "The band was setting up to do some Germs tunes. I eked my way on to the drums, Buddy [Akita] started play, Chris [Kulcsar] started to scream, and we really enjoyed it. We hooked up a couple days later and 'Unicorn' and '10/11' were pretty much written right then."

Version City Records will release a new *Black Moment 7"* in September and the band, will continue to tour. With a solid live EP already out and full-length to be recorded at Ghetto Recorder Studios in Detroit in late August by Jim Diamond (Dirtbombs), TMIBH is garnering well-deserved attention.

Thomas says their music is an attempt to "be political but not annoying." "We want to say something important," he says. "Yet say it in a sexy way."

And what's more Midwest than that?

Bassholes, Grafton, This Moment in Black History, Clone Defects, DJ Lawrence Caswell  
11pm, Friday, July 18  
Grog Shop  
2785 Euclid Heights Boulevard  
216.321.5588  
Tickets: \$7

#### ***Grafton-Blind Horse Campaign (Dead Canary) Bassholes-Out In the Treetops (Dead Canary)***

The fine folks at Dead Canary are launching their label with a pair of releases guaranteed to restore your faith in the power of loud guitars and cheap beer.

It wasn't a demure debutante ball, but Dead Canary's recent double-release show at Little Brother's (that's in Columbus, for all you non-locals) unleashed the sophomore effort from Columbus's Grafton as well as a vinyl EP from the Bassholes. A

trio and a duo, respectively, Grafton and the Bassholes manage to coax more racket from their modest set-ups than Scandinavia can muster from its legions of guitar-rock throwbacks. That's right, I said it-Columbus is more rockin' than Sweden. Go ahead, revoke my Ikea credit card-see if I care.

Featuring members whose pedigrees include time served in outfits like Bob City, it should come as little surprise that Grafton specializes in riff-heavy Midwestern rock. Uh, not Midwestern like the Replacements, Midwestern like the region of the country responsible for producing many of the nation's serial killers. It's loud and it's ugly. But damn, does it rock.

Imagine sludgy Seattle dirges mixed with stompin' Appalachian rawk and you're on the right path. Some Motorhead, some Sympathy for the Record Industry, some violently repressed indie-rock melodies and a whole mess of catchy riffs and Lou Poster's drill Sgt. vocals come together in Grafton's sound to offer songs that are hooky and melodic almost in spite of themselves.

Previously released as part of Grafton's Diaphragm Records 7", "Sumbitch" and "Fine, Good, Go!" turn up on the new Blind Horse Campaign LP, along with numbers like "I've Been Lookin'" and "Slowpoke" that have been highlights of the band's absurdly loud live shows of late.

The Bassholes have been a hard-hittin' swamp rock two-piece since just after the last of the dinosaurs shuffled off into the sunset. This means they've had a lot of time to get their act together. With their Dead Canary EP, Out In the Treetops, the Bassholes have recorded the coolest, most rockin', most delightfully spooky song I've heard since, well, since I don't know when. The title track, "Out In the Treetops," finds guitarist/yowler Don Howland settling into a laid back Iggy Pop timbre and casually tossing off lines like "In my next live I decided I am living in your house," before freaking out for a few bars of chorus wailing, then settling back into the eerily nonchalant verse groove. Damn, Iggy Pop wishes he was this cool (and don't expect to hear the sounds of the Bassholes pimping cruise ships TV ads any time soon... "Lust for Life," my ass).

And all you young garage-dwellers with your saucy haircuts and matching outfits owe the Bassholes more than you probably even realize. Forget the tired old Blues Explosion, the Bassholes rock the blues, punk. Fans of the Oblivians and '68 Comeback will love it.

The remainder of the record comes and goes with some highs and lows, but nothing can trump Treetops. The Bassholes tear through a cover of the Stooges "Raw Power" (with a vicious guitar solo courtesy of Grafton's Poster), though the mix is so ragged that it's almost impossible to decipher. Maybe this was done on purpose, as a sort of tribute to the classic sonic mess of the Stooges, but it's hard to be sure. Sometimes bad production is just bad production (to paraphrase our old buddy Freud). Anyway, it doesn't matter, you can always just put "Out In the Treetops" on repeat (it's vinyl, so this will involve getting up and moving the needle, kids), and you'll get your money's worth.

Now, I'm not delusional, I realize that while I reckon these are two of the finest slabs of plastic to grace my speakers this year, most people will continue on through the world of pre-fab pop and faux-angst-ridden alterna-schlock without giving Grafton or the Bassholes a second thought, which is a shame. But, c'mon-- you're smarter than the average Everclear/Foo Fighters listenin' fratboys, right? Right. -Karen E. Graves, *Swizzle-Stick*

Booz bluesin' punk rock from Cowlumbus, Ohio, that rocks hard in that drunken, don't-give-a-fuck way that weaves all over the road between sub-genres but doesn't stay in anyone's lane. You just gotta call that shit rock and roll, and when it sticks to your ribs like these tunes do, you gotta go back for seconds! There's a bit of back-porch twang here, some psycho-country turned up to 11, that fans of **Supersuckers** or **Tenderloin** would totally get into. Shit like this lives or dies by its energy, and **Grafton** have assloads of it – they're a scorching drunk-and-roll experience live, and they managed the difficult task of distilling a lot of that piss'n'vinegar onto plastic here. If you're into that raucous, rawkin' **Zeke/Gas Huffer/Nashville Pussy** school of gee-tar, Grafton'll get ya liquored and lubed up just right. Check 'em out! -Keith Bergman, *Infernal Combustion*

Hehe, das Label hat in der Tat einen toten Kanarienvogel als Logo. Eric Davidson hat das Bandinfo verfasst, und wenn der Herr der Meinung ist, als Verweise MULE, MUDHONEY, MONO MEN und LAUGHING HYENAS angeben zu müssen, dann weiß er, was er tut, denn Bands, an die sich - mit Ausnahme von MUDHONEY - mehr Leute als ein paar

alte Säcke erinnern können, sind das nun wirklich nicht.

"Blind Horse Campaign" ist dabei erst die zweite Veröffentlichung des Labels, und der zweite Longplayer der Band, die aus Columbus, Ohio stammt. Rauher, direkter, tretender Garage-Rock, wütend und groovend zugleich, und eben mit diesem verzweifelten, bluesigen Unterton, der den Verweis auf MULE und LAUGHING HYENAS erlaubt.

Eingeschoben gibt's dann auch mal eine rein instrumentale Bluegrass-Nummer, und auch das gelingt der Band, die man sich auch auf Estrus und von Tim Kerr produziert vorstellen kann.

Ausprobieren. (31:23) (7/10) -**Joachim Hiller, *Ox Fanzine***

Wow, I didn't expect to like this at all but so far so good. Heavy, loud, fast with gruff vocals, a wee bit stonery, a wee bit bluesy, a wee bit JESUS LIZARD/MUDHONEY at times even...this whole record, the packaging and the music is no frills. No bullshit, I like it. This is the kinda band that OTHER people like, and I usually don't understand it. I just shrug my shoulders and walk away. But now I've opened my eyes and my mind, and I dig it. Thanks to a little think called tolerance! Fans of BLACK KEYS take note! -**Norah No-No, *Horizontal Action***

**GRUNGE (OLD) Mudhoney** probably endured the worst critical-popularity-to-commercial-success ratio of any grunge-era Seattle band, but hey: The band is still together, classic scuzz-rock documents like *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge* have aged splendidly, and its latest, *Since We've Become Translucent*, was greeted warmly by the flannel faithful. We strongly suspect they'll tackle their Friday and Saturday night stands at Bottom of the Hill with white-hot intensity. Go. **GRUNGE (NEW)** But perhaps Mudhoney won't satisfy your lust for booze-soaked sonic intensity they way they once could; if so, check out Ohio upstarts **Grafton**, whose indie release *Blind Horse Campaign* is a howling ode to giant beer guts, gravel-chomping guitar rock histrionics, and pure ear-shattering *volume*. If amp size matters to you, these guys'll knock yer socks off. Tonight (Wednesday 10) at SF's Thee Parkside. -**Rob Harvilla, *East Bay Express***

I had a friend in college who lived in an apartment that shared a wall with Jay's Upstairs. Though most nights, we were all out until late anyway, it was bands like Columbus, Ohio's Grafton that made the rest of us less-than-envious of her living conditions. Grafton is a powerhouse of a band. The lead singer pushes his voice to the limit, and keeps pushing. The drums play full speed ahead, and the guitar and bass, throw their full force into the mix. This is a night to play hard, dance hard and sweat an ocean. At Jay's Upstairs. -**Erica Parfit, *Missoilian***

If there's a Columbus sound I think this might be it, or at least Grafton is probably a good representative of the loud and heavy rock that has come out of that town as of late. The Means being another good example of that brand of bombastic heavy load. Grafton ain't afraid to get jiggy with it and go down the hillbilly route in places. They'll make you forget what you're listening to if you're not careful. -**Muggsy McMurphy, *Reglar Wiglar***

Back in the day when R 'n' R had something to do with music, there were musicians that actually believed that skill and creativity (not to mention fun) were more important than photo ops and wardrobes the size of your average Baltic country. While no one truly knows whether the three Ohioan boys who make up Grafton feel the same, their new album *Blind Horse Campaign* (Best Title Ever!) pretty much just rocks. From the wonderfully clean and simple blend of the first track "I've Been Lookin'" to the last tasty drop of "Lord Baltimore" (don't know who that is, don't care), this is some (note the cleverness of this critic's linguistic palate) cool shit.

This is the kind of stuff that you throw into the CD player on a Friday night and head for the bars, only to spend fifteen minutes in the parking lot looking like a fool while you rock out in your car to the whole rest of the freakin' album (yes, yours truly did just that). If you have money and like good music, go buy this NOW. Track #6, "The Captain and Big

Muskie", is alone worth the price, and you get ten whole other songs as well!

As a matter of fact, you are wasting valuable time just reading this crap when you should be out pickin' this shiny round thing up in your beer and cigarette-stained fingers. As Nanne Tepper of *OOR* so perfectly put it: "Grafton kicks ass, zo simpel is het eigenlijk!"

That's goddamn straight, Tepper, goddamn straight. -**Brandon Whitehead, *EKC***

### **Like A Coal Miner, Grafton Rocks Hard**

Growing up as a coal miner's kid, one learns to push. Pushing to get food on the table. Pushing to clothe one's hide. Pushing to get the coal out. Sweating. Bleeding. Getting dirty. Finding respite in rock 'n' roll.

But sometimes one must push themselves out of the mines; the dust gets to be too much. The money's not so hot. Coming home tired just isn't the best way to come home.

So one pushes the music. They push the sound, the levels, the instruments. But they're tough, from the mines, so nothing breaks until they do.

There's coal in the tracks of Grafton's self-titled debut CD. It's thick and it's loud, and it pushes.

It's only natural for a coal miner's son, grandson and great grandson to push. It runs in their blood; it runs in their music.

The record explodes out of the speakers in a mess of Donovan Roth's bass, Jason McKiernan's drums and Lou Poster's guitar and country-rocked vocals. The instruments fall all over each other. It bleeds together and swirls into a cloud of dirty, shuddering, stubborn rock 'n' roll — exactly what one would expect to force its way out of a West Virginia coal mine.

It's hard to find folk music like this anymore.

It's music that puts everything the musician has in the world into every song and drives it into the listener's head. Walking a mile in his shoes, and one's feet ache as if they have walked ten. It's not a sad record; it's an album that makes one feel.

There aren't any jangling acoustic guitars or sappy "won't you come ache with me" lyrics. There's shouting guitar shoved to its limits and lines, such as "she doesn't need provocation/she was already taken." These aren't so much a pitiful lament as they are a call for reprieve. It's the sound of shouldering a day's work, and then finding a true love gone.

But when that happens, a coal miner doesn't turn to his buddy for a shoulder to cry on, he turns to his guitar for an ax to murder with.

Not that the guys in Grafton are murderous psychos; they're actually quite amiable. They like their card tricks, their beer and fat bottomed women — Freddy Mercury would be proud.

They also love local bands and support them with a steadfast fervor bent on developing and maintaining the Columbus indie rock scene's autonomy.

It's people like this that keep rock 'n' roll moving forward. They create their own sound and make sure that others who do the same don't fall by the wayside.

It's not about the money; it's about the art, the feeling and the push. It has to be brought up from the inside — the inside of one's self and the inside of the scene. Once one has it out, they've got to keep pushing.

It's not so different from pushing coal out of a mine. Maybe that's why Grafton's so good at it. -**Kyle Pearson, *The Lantern***

## GRAFTON

### Sumbitches in the heartland

“Jason was in another band (Preston Furman) in 1996 and I saw them in a basement bar. He’s the best drummer I’ve ever seen, just amazing. Blew me away. A few months later I moved into an apartment with him and two other guys from local bands, and we started playing as a two-piece in the basement in our spare time. Ample spare time. I think I was living on \$200 a month in those days and rent was \$175. SO I was about 120 pounds and ate a lot of ramen, rice, and cheese slices, but I had plenty of time for music...”

Lou Poster is a man who’s got his head on straight. He’s the smart, charismatic vocalist/guitarist for the Columbus OH trio Grafton, who has a voice that sounds like a good beer tastes. Together with his band mates Jason McKiernan, cofounder and helluva great drummer and Donovan Roth, hard as a hammer bassist, he’s created a glorious racket over two albums and several tours.

Their sound can best be described as punk steeped in alt.country and classic rock. Something like Waylon Jennings playing the blues in a blender strapped to a rocket. There are no frills, just bass, drums, guitar, and voice. And Grafton proves you can do a lot with little.

A lot of their influences come from the early to mid-90’s Indie rock scene. Lou looks back at that time bitter sweetly; “After Nirvana blew out the main seals kids either went back to top 40 or started digging in the bins that supplied them with Bleach in the first place. Archers Of Loaf, The Pixies, SST’s back catalog, the Mono Men, some real good shit...The trendies, though there was a certain pretentiousness about it, hadn’t fully sunk their teeth into the new thing, and it was still honest, real. Then you get Modest Mouse and the Elephant 6 having success (some of which is musically great but appealed to the basest kind of soulless sycophantic white kid art student set) and it started getting gross and that was just the beginning...Once it became obvious that every bad haircut fad hopping white belted indie rock douche bag (who we initially became a fucked up folk punk 2 piece to spite) was gonna start a 2 piece blues band, we got Donovan to join and started writing more amped up songs. That was ‘99.”

Grafton is a blues band, in the sense that Black Flag was a blues band or that Steve Earle is a punk. The songs wail and shout and moan and bare their teeth, in the best blues tradition, but what one would first associate with the sound of the blues is lost in tempo and distortion. It’s the atmosphere around the songs. It’s easy to imagine Muddy Waters slowing down ‘Oxblood’ or ‘The Day They Ran Us Out Of Town’. These songs could have easily have been recorded with acoustic guitar and pedal steel.

I first became aware of Grafton when I received my first batch of cds to review for Sponic Zine (.com that is) back in 2002, and it was their self titled full length debut (on Deraillleur Records) waiting at the bottom of that stack that just blew me away. For months afterward I drove my wife crazy playing it over and over again. And yes, I gave them a glowing review and they made my top ten of the year.

From the guns-a-blazin’ opener ‘Last Night At The Brite & Clean’, to the ode to Ohio ‘A Toast To Gravity’ to the funky Minutemen-esque closer ‘Wake Up Brass’ their’s is a ‘rough and raw sound with enough classic rock chasing punk in a pool of whiskey to make any dance floor unsafe.’ (As I said in my original review.)

2003 brought their second album Blind Horse Campaign, on Dead Canary Records, which Lou operates with Scott Stroemer. It sounds better, the songs are tighter, and just like the first album, you’re left hungry for more. ‘I’ve Been Lookin’ comes on like an unexpected fist in a crowded bar. ‘Sumbitch’ is one every married man can relate to. ‘The Day They Ran Us Out Of Town’ is a hard rocking view of “man’s evil nature”. ‘The Captain and Big Muskie’ is country-fied instrumental. ‘Slowpoke’ is mid tempo stomper, with a nervous energy, like the song is trying to go faster, but is being weighed down. ‘Fine, Good, Go’ has a great bass intro and a chorus containing those three little words almost guaranteed to put the breaks on a relationship; “FINE...GOOD...GO!” The album closes with ‘Lord Baltimore’ which was the name of the Indian tracker in the film Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, “a song about complacency and self preservation and once again the fear of death.”

Did Blind Horse Campaign make my top ten for 2003? At #2 right behind the Beatles; Let It Be...Naked and right before the White Stripes, Elephant. Almost as good as the Beatles and better than the White Stripes, if only I worked at Rolling Stone...

What, to me any way, adds weight to the songs of Grafton, is the fact that these are not eighteen year old kids whining about some girl that doesn’t like them the same way they like her. These are three men playing hard rocking working class



punk that people over the age of twenty-five can listen to and feel included. While Jason and Donovan are “what you’d call ‘eligible bachelors’, if you ate a lot of acid”, Lou has been married to his wife Paula for four years and is the father of a three year old daughter. When he’s not rocking the shit out of America he works as a screen printer. So it would be safe to say that when there’s a shit show out on tour, and there’s little or no money being made it fucking sucks and it sucks hard. “It definitely makes the shows that don’t turn out so well seem that much harder for me personally. It’s one thing to drive 20 hours and play to 7 people and yea that sucks but early on it seems worth it to put your back into the thing and grind it out, make a name for yourself-it’s not like we’ve got money or a publicist or even an established label backing us. So that felt like honest work and dues paying.”

And honest work and dues paying doesn’t scare Grafton one bit. Lou was raised by a 3rd generation coal miner. Donovan is a bartender and Jason is a social worker. I can tell you first hand that being an artist and having a family that depends on you can be a soul crushing, stressful life.

“...To know that you’re leaving your family for a month or longer at a time makes those shit shows a lot more depressing. Like ‘I’m causing my wife and daughter and band mates all this stress for THIS?’”

But those that press on and don’t give up will always be rewarded. Eventually. “The last 2 big tours have actually been very positive. People are starting to catch on it seems and that makes the time away from home a lot more bearable. And my wife’s great, she really makes it work out.”

As far as aiming for fame and fortune in the current state of rock and roll, Grafton are realists. “Fuck, it almost seem pointless aiming for anything these days. Paying the bills is about as lofty a goal as I’ve come to.” They’ll keep going forward with albums and tours for as possible, chasing the next great show.

“I think there’s a reaction coming from rock and roll that no one’s prepared for. There’s been success from the underground, the White Stripes are the exponent of that, and that’s opened a few people’s eyes to the possibility of music coming from under, not over, their heads.” But where are all the IT bands of the last couple of years. The industry laid to waste the newest rock resurgence without a shot being fired. And you’d never know that older established bands had even released new albums. In the last couple of years great albums by Alice Cooper, the Buzzcocks, the Rollins Band, and Danzig have gone almost completely unnoticed and ignored by radio. This is what country music did to their established artists. Marginalizing Merle Haggard, George Jones, and Johnny Cash, in favor watered down pop rip offs. What has to happen now, is there needs to be a new entry point for new fans, the way No Depression functioned for alt.country (whatever that is), to discover all the great rock that is continually coming from the underground. Because FM radio ain’t gonna play Grafton.

“We have a chance right now to stand on a platform that’s been elevated by the changing tide of public opinion and show them what REAL rock and roll is. Do you think the public at large could digest the Cheater Slicks? Or Federation X? Or We March? Or The Fireballs of Freedom? Or the Means? Do you think they could look at their horrible selves in all their compromised glory and sing at the top of their lungs “EVERYTHING MOVES SO FAST/EVERYTHING’S IN THE PAST/EXCEPT THIS, RIGHT NOW!”? Probably not and it’s a shame. But it’s time we found out.” –**Tim Murr**, *Union Cross*