

interviews

Interview with The Plague - 1998

COLLIDE

by Daniel Hinds

One of the best American bands to hit the electro/industrial/darkwave scene in the past few years is most certainly Collide. This LA-based duo (that's kaRIN on vocals/lyrics and Statik handling music/production) turned a lot of heads with the textured, entrancing sound of their '96 debut album, *Beneath the Skin*. Along with a couple singles and a zillion compilation appearances (the most recent being their take on "Son of a Preacher Man" from the *CyberPunk Fiction* release), the band released a CD full of remixes in '97 titled *Distort*. The 14 song outing featured contributions from the likes of SMP, Regenerator, Idiot Stare, Das Ich and many other notable artists.

How has the response been to *Distort* so far?

Statik: It's been better than we've expected, really. We've gotten response from people who liked *Distort*, and had never heard *Beneath the Skin*. I thought that only people that had our first album would be interested in it, but we've definitely gathered a few more listeners with it.

Were you happy with the way it turned out?

kaRIN: Yes we were really happy with the whole thing--I think all of the remixers did a great job in doing their own interpretations--I liked especially when they messed with the vocals or dropped out the chorus or gave it a totally new layer, like for example the Spirits in Sin remix of "Falling Up"--I particularly like that one, it's quite different from the original.

What can we expect next from Collide? Have you got any new material recorded?

kaRIN; Next up is a video, we just shot it a couple of weeks ago with director Kevin McVey, for "Son of a Preacher Man". We are really quite happy with it, it's weird and a little quirky, it should be pretty amusing --complete with an isolation tank, some wacky stuffed strawberries, a penguin and a big pink pig. Also, Ron Wilkins the original writer of the song, which apparently has been covered over 70 times, was nice enough to come and do a cameo in the video. We are hoping that it might actually get some airplay--but we'll have to see as there are a lot of politics involved in reaching more commercial airwaves. Other than that we have been working on new stuff and although the songs--about seven rough now are still in their early stages, I like the way they are coming out.

Statik: It's been a slow year for us in terms of finishing songs. We started a bunch but then we keep getting sidetracked. Our lives have been overly hectic this year. Just next month things are finally settling down to where we should have a good length of time to start working again.

What are your long term goals in terms of your music career?

Statik: I don't think I like to think too far ahead in terms of where Collide is headed, because so far things always seem to go slower than we would like. The things that I think should take one month take two and things that take six months take a year. It can be frustrating if you let it get to you. I like to just think of more immediate things and getting those done.

kaRIN: Not be distracted by having to make a living at other things.

kaRIN, your paintings are quite cool (I esp. liked "Soul") - any chance any of them will show up on fu-

ture Collide releases?

kaRIN: Thanks, I love to paint, but so far I can't reach the point that I want to, the thing I really like about music is you can actually get inside it and be really concise about what you are expressing. Painting so far is not quite as satisfying because I can't execute exactly what I want. As for will one of my paintings be making it onto a Collide CD, I guess, if I ever paint one that seems to really work for the album, it will.

Do you feel the underground scene for this type of music is healthier now than when you started out or not?

kaRIN; That's a good question and yes I think it is with the help of things like the internet strengthening means of communication, however, I also feel that the scene is stagnating and people are still stuck in the past--I know that when I go out to a club I want to hear new things, I get bored hearing the same old stuff--I really appreciate the DJ's out there who are trying to expose people to new music--without that freshness coming in I think people will get bored.

Statik: I think if you think of music in any terms that are too specific, whatever that genre is--it is only going to last for so long. I think industrial, or gothic or whatever was defined in the early days of the scene. I think that people's tastes will always continue to grow and change and the bands that are able and willing to change along with those changes are the ones that will be able to last.

Has ReConstriction been good to you? Do you plan to work with them for a while?

kaRIN: Re-con has been great--we really do love Chase (quirky label slumlord) and think that he has done a great job at promoting us. The downfall, as with any small label is that the distribution sucks and there is no tour support and squishing out money is literally like pulling teeth, so of course that gets frustrating... so we'll see...?

Looking back on Beneath the Skin, what elements are you happiest with? Least happy with?

Statik: I'm happy with the whole thing, really. That is, for as much as we could do, I don't think we could have tried any harder to make it any better. If there had been songs where I didn't put 100% into them, I would feel different, but there weren't, so I don't. As far as a favorite song on it goes...I would have to say "Pandora's Box." I just like every aspect of it...vocals, sounds..mix...it just came together really well.

I noticed you used guitar and bass on a number of tracks on Beneath the Skin. Any thoughts of using other instrumentation in the future? (mandolin, flute, horns, etc.)

kaRIN: I say bring on the instruments!!! I am open to using as many interesting instruments and guest musicians as possible--it all adds interesting variation.

Statik: I have to agree with kaRIN. I don't know that I'll be playing any mandolin on the new songs, but if there is a song that calls for anything out of the ordinary or live, I'm all for it. It all goes into the computer at some point, so where ever the sound comes from, it's going to get tweaked somehow.

kaRIN: We like the word tweak way too much...

Devo - I love those guys! What inspired you to pick "Whip It" to cover?

Statik: We really wanted to cover a band that wore flowerpots on their heads, and Devo was the only one that we could think of. It was either Devo or an Adam and the Ants song, but I don't think either Adam or any of the ants wore flowerpots?

"Felix the Cat" was very cool. Was that a fun track to do? What did you think of TV Terror as a whole?

kaRIN: We actually did not want to be on TV Terror at all--we really did not relate to many of the TV shows and turned the offer down twice until Chase really begged--he's kind of cute when he begs, so we decided to do Felix the Cat because we like cats, not because of the cartoon. Then, when I was singing the song it sort of began to feel like a feeling I had when I was lost my dog and for months I used to walk the streets calling for it, only to find out that it had possibly been murdered by my neighbour (long story) anyway, it turned into that whole feeling so if it sounds a little tortured--it is.

Statik: Felix was fun to do. Actually, any of the cover songs we've done have been enjoyable to do. It's like being asked to paint a specific picture of something but you're able to put all of your personality in it. Cover songs can be interesting that way. Picasso and Dali would certainly paint a different picture of an elephant now wouldn't they?

Looking through your web-site, there is a photograph called "Psychic Neon" with the commentary "glows, falsely." What is your take on the whole psychic phenomenon?

kaRIN: I think people are often trying to find a way to externalize their life and seek answers outside of themselves when I think all the answers and directions are inside and you must confront them yourself and take personal responsibility.

Have you received any particularly moving or disturbing fan letters over the years?

kaRIN; So far nothing to disturbing fortunately--a couple of slightly weird ones though.

Statik: Yea, I'd have to say where we're a falling short with the creepy and disturbing fans. We're behind on our quota, that's for sure. I don't mind really, though. To all of the disturbed fans out there, you can go find another band to like. I think the creepy ones are fine though.

Statik, in two of the interviews I've read with you, you have warned folks about computers. Have you been wronged by a computer in the past? It's good to talk about these kind of things...

Statik: ...have I? yes...beware of the computer, for one day it shall rise up and take over!!! no, really, I love computers, and I hate computers. I would love them more if the people that write the programs and make them would take more care in making them crashproof. There are just so many things that often go wrong that are out of the users control, that I know they can often get beyond frustrating!!! If I could get a computer that would never crash, never lose any data...I would be so happy. Is that too much to ask?? Well, at the moment, yes.

What do you do to relax?

kaRIN: Dance...I find there is some sort of line you can cross where you can almost get outside of yourself. Dance has always been a way for me to take all of my bottled up junk and get rid of it--that was one of the first pulls for me into underground clubs, it was like going to a twisted expressional ballet--that appealed to me.

Statik: besides sleep? sleep. I like my Sony Playstation..Tomraider is a great game...I like my cats, my fish, and an occasional movie.