

theMighty Thrush Hermit

By MELISSA BUOTE

"When I was about twelve or thirteen, I took up guitar. Rob started playing guitar before I did, but my dad played guitar for years, so I picked it up from my father -- probably partly out of the desire because Rob played. Then we started playing together," reminisced Halifax native Joel Plaskett.

The year would have been around 1989. The band was Nabisco Fonzie featuring junior high rockers Rob Benvie and Ian McGettigan along with Plaskett. Playing sets consisting of covers of the Stones and Led Zeppelin, the trio managed to forge some kind of neighbourhood star status.

1997 has ushered in a new era for those Nabisco Fonzie kids. Now they are all grown up and in a band called Thrush Hermit, and the band now has their first major label release on Elektra under their monogrammed belts.

Sweet Homewrecker is the first full length album by the Hermit, but is not their first release by far. With a slew of independent cassettes, CD EPS on *Murderecords* and numerous vinyl singles on labels both in Canada and the US (ie Cinnamon Toast and Genius), these boys have definitely paid their dues.

With their recently penned contract to the Warner affiliate, the band is losing much of the do-it-yourself aspect of the recording process. Whether or not this is good or bad has yet to be seen.

"With Murder, we had to do most of the art work and stuff -- it was in our hands. We'd find people to do it with us, whereas with Elektra there are people who do all that stuff -- they hire photographers and things like that.

"We're pretty excited about Elektra, but we're very excited that the record is out, too. Elektra have been good to us so far and I think it will work out all right. I think it's just a matter of them supporting the

record and us supporting the record as well. A lot of it is on our shoulders to do the right thing."

Doing the "right thing" does not necessarily mean doing what every other band is doing at present. At a time when the vast majority of their contemporaries are releasing pop gems, the Hermit has dug deep into their nitty gritty sensibilities, producing a record of pure rock and roll.

"We were trying to go for something that wasn't totally polished and anal in terms of being so concerned about it being perfect. We wanted to keep the excitement... I like pop music, but I like rock music more and to maintain that and give the title of 'Rock Band' to our band is what we are trying to achieve -- not just catchy little songs, but heavy weight songs that mean something -- like Led Zeppelin or

something -- we are a rock band.

"With this record we at least came closer to a well rounded picture of what our band is about. I think *The Great Pacific Ocean* was neat just for the rawness of it, but I think this new record, *Sweet Homewrecker*, at least gives a clearer picture. The thing is, live shows are something a little more celebratory and light-hearted [and you can't capture that on recordings], especially when you write sadder songs. You want to give them the right treatment in the studio, whereas live there is a little bit more antics going on."

Thrush Hermit has always been known by their fans to have an action packed, entertaining live show. Since they have played shows in bars since they were a mere sixteen years of age, they have also been tagged as being a

young, cute, energetic band. All being in their early twenties now, it is still hard to shake that label.

"We want to be an entertaining band because that's an important aspect of being in a band -- to go out and entertain people. Whether people perceive us as cute or not, we have no control over. The fact that we were young, I guess, was like 'oh, they're young and exciting and cute,' or whatever, but just to go out and be entertaining is a really important aspect of it. You can be pegged that way -- like kind of kitschy or tongue-in-cheek rock, but I think we've always strived for something more than that -- a deeper level of what the songs mean."

When all is said and done, it isn't going to be how cute or kitschy the band is that makes *Sweet Homewrecker* a success. It is the talent that

counts, and Thrush Hermit delivers.

"If this record is successful I'd be really excited. We're going to go out and tour behind it, but if it did well, then it would set us up for what we want to do next and mean that people would buy it. Whereas, if this record fails miserably then what we do next won't matter on a public level, it will matter just as much to us, but it may mean not as many people will hear it

"I stand behind this record more than any other one we've done. I really think that it is a much more well rounded record and the songs are better. I think that the emotions expressed and the lyrics go to a new level and musically it goes to a new level. So, if people don't like that, well, what can I do? We went the way we wanted to go and I'm pleased with it."



PHOTO CREDIT : LEGGO / CUT THE FAT 1997

THRUSH HERMIT

From left: Joel Plaskett, Rob Benvie, Cliff Gibb and Ian McGettigan of Thrush Hermit.