

MUSIC + STYLE

RAYGUN,

AL JOU GENSEN ON MIN-

ISRY, REVOLTING COCKS

AND TRASH CULTURE

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PUNK ROCK TV WITH

SMASHING PUMPKINS,

BEASTIE BOYS, BABES

TOYLAND, ETC.

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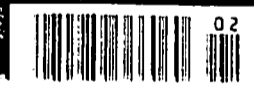
TOYLAND

BEASTIE BOYS

SMASHING PUMPKINS

BABES

RAYGUN



You can call him **AL** JOUR- gensen BY **KATHER-** ine TUR- man

Jourgensen is perched on the edge of his sofa, transfixed by the big-screen TV image of a homely, obese, trailer-park mama gyrating in too-small K-Mart lingerie and big white undies and drinking an Old Milwaukee, a breast occasionally popping out, while her idiotically grinning—brother, father, husband, all three?—picks up the much-maligned family dog and simulates sex with it.

The new Ministry video? The latest Revolting Cocks clip? Hardly, but it's a gem nonetheless—an anonymous home movie found in a West Virginia bus station and presented to Jourgensen by a roadie aware of his perverse fascination with trash culture.

While a 1983 "synth-disco" album, *With Sympathy*, marked Ministry's misguided birth, the band, now up to album numero five with 1992's *Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed and the Way to Suck Eggs*, has been getting progressively heavier and apocalyptic, though too-narrowly draped with the "industrial" music mantle, especially following the band's ultra-intense, show-stealing success on the '92 Lollapalooza tour. "I used industrial noises, but so what? I use guitars, that doesn't make me Led Zeppelin," quips Ministry main man Jourgensen.

Though the voice behind Ministry, Jourgensen does much collaborative work with longtime friend and Ministry/Revolting Cocks bassist Paul Barker. He explains the difference between the two most popular bands thusly: "Ministry is roll up your sleeves and get the shit done, while the [~~politely-abbreviated~~] RevCo is camping."

At present, the self-proclaimed "laziest man in America" has five fully functioning bands—Ministry, Cocks, 1,000 Homo DJs and, with former Dead Kennedy Jello Biafra, Lard. Other, less-pressing projects include Pailhead, Acid Horse and the countrified Buck Satan and the 666 Shooters. But wait, there's more! Jourgensen eagerly proffers photos of his almost-ready-for-occupation, Seventies-era 13-bedroom ranch (with one bedroom pegged for Butthole Surfer Gibby Haynes), site of the RevCo World studio, where his first production will be Texan punkabilly band the Reverend Horton Heat.

Clearly, the singer/producer/Renaissance man/country music hopeful/wildman imposes no limits on himself, a reputation furthered by the media-drained Lollapalooza, where Ministry's dressing room was PC—as in "party central"—and Jourgensen was a frequent, eager consumer of the vile "bile beer" regurgitated by a member of the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow.

At home, however, Jourgensen proves the consummate host, open and relaxed. "I'm not drunk, just drinking regular Cokes, you must be so disappointed," he deadpans, looking for all the world like Gary Oldman in *Dracula* in his requisite hat and blue-tinted sunglasses. "Well, at least I have some dead animals."

That he does. His small, cluttered, temporary base in his new hometown of Austin isn't strictly the apartment of an impossibly intense, charming, eloquent former heroin addict. It's a combination of teenage boy, subversive intellectual artiste and trash culture aficionado: A poster of Aleister Crowley peers down from the wall; hundreds of CDs (country, ranging from Tammy Wynette to Ferlin Husky, predominates) are stacked in the fireplace, many jars of dead animals floating in formaldehyde populate the kitchen bar, animal skulls hang on the walls and near-life-size, cracked religious statues lurk in what passes for the dining area.

It's about five hours until the wall clock—which is an hour fast—strikes Thanksgiving, and Jourgensen has much to be thankful for. It wasn't always that way, but with age—he's 33 and content with it—has come security, both personal and financial, and, subsequently, sobriety. "The main reason I quit heroin (which he used on and off for 13 years) is I realized...I used to think it helped my creativity, but in retrospect, it was 'cause I really didn't have a lot of confidence in what I was doing," Jourgensen says. "I don't mean to sound like a conceited prick now, but the point is that I have some self-confidence in what I'm doing. It's not the greatest; it's not the worst. It's okay, and it's what I do, and I've come to grips with that."

The first thing done completely straight was an Anthrax remix, and when he was a guest on stage with the aforementioned, it was his first time performing sober. "Now I can remember a lot of stuff and I'm having a lot more fun with it," he acknowledges. The FRESHLY DIVORCED Jourgensen is also quick to add, "I went to a rehab place this time; I got professional help. I changed my inner and outer environment. I still have fun in other ways. I'm not going to say what or where (he still visibly smokes and drinks, at the very least), but I only do it with things I can control or moderate. I think a person should try anything. I'm certainly not anti-drug, but I am anti-slavery. The only problem is I can't do heroin in moderation. I'll always be an addict with that. I quit for a couple years at a time, but a lot of things are different this time. First of all, I say 'Never say never.' But I know it's not necessary for my creative process, which is a big thing."

The edge, however, given the increasing intensity of Ministry, and the humor inherent in RevCo, has clearly not dulled.

His see-through phone rings (not for the first time) and Jourgensen chats for a moment, then offers, "Here, talk to Tim." It's his newish but very close pal, Timothy Leary, who waxes enthusiastic about Jourgensen's literacy, intelligence and general coolness, rambling on about Burroughs, the Beats, Hippies and White Zambie.

"That's an interesting thing with Tim," Jourgensen begins a few minutes later, lighting another cigarette. "When I first met him, I told him I'd been doing experiments with the human voice, because I don't have a life. I'm bored," he says. "I just sit there in the studio and do these experiments. I take voices and study their cadence and meter and pitch, and out of thousands of voices and speeches, I've only heard three people who speak consistently on beat, to any BPM. Tim can speak on beat, no matter what. He doesn't have to hear the song. Same with [William] Burroughs, and the third one is Aleister Crowley. I have tapes of some of his incantations. I've used all three of them now (in recording), and I'm looking for more, because I think it's a really interesting quality, and it's unexplainable. For instance, Tim, all he was hearing when he spoke "Gila Gopher" [off the latest Revolting Cocks album, *Linger Ficken Good and Other Barnyard Obscurities*], was sirens and helicopters in his headphones. That wasn't the beat. One take. He just spoke it."

A self-confessed author groupie who cites Burroughs as his all-time favorite, Jourgensen has literary plans of his own, perhaps with pal Jim Rose, namesake of the sideshow circus. "We were talking about writing a book together on dreams. Dreams that I've had, dreams that he's had, getting other people to write their dreams. Celebrity dreams—not like Joan Collins—but friends of ours, almost like a short fiction collection."

Jourgensen's surprisingly humanistic, liberal, jack-of-all-trades and-master-of-quite-a-few approach can be directly traced to his days as a juvenile delinquent. Growing up in a suburb of Chicago, a young Jourgensen got into the usual scrapes, and it landed him in a **MENTAL HOSPITAL**, taking what he refers to as an insurance-company-paid vacation from mom and dad. "I went in there," he says, "and the tutor they gave me smoked pot; I never wanted to leave! I'm in this mental hospital for drug abuse at the age of 14, getting free drugs from the doctors. They alternated between thornazine and tuinals."

The diagnosis?

"I think they just said I was an asshole," he chortles. "But that's where I really grew up sexually. They separated the girls and the guys on the third and fourth floors, but on the fifth floor was the ping pong table and rec room. It was just like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. We'd play poker with the orderlies, I'd win and they'd give me 'bathroom privileges,'" he recalls, looking excited at the memory. "I had a tutor who turned me on to *Naked Lunch*, Charles Bukowski, all this shit. This was heaven! Every Saturday, we'd have meetings with parents and the psychiatrists and the patients, and it was just a bunch of white suburban kids. We all loved it; we weren't nuts, we were just being kids. So on Saturday, all the kids would act like schizos. My parents caught on after a few months. But I was willing to stay there until the day I died. Sex, drugs and really decent literature."

Soon after his "release," his family moved to Colorado, where the future multi-faceted artist skied, rode bulls in amateur rodeos and drove a truck. He also discovered punk at a fateful Ramones performance. "I saw them in Essets Field in Denver in 1976. This place held like 300 people, and there was only 21 people there," Jourgensen says. "I'd just read about this punk rock thing up in the mountains, so me and my friend Eddie drove down, and we didn't know what to make of it. We were kinda neutral, the switch-hitters of the crowd, wearing our slo cowboy hats—that same cowboy hat I wear now in my photos, I had that when I was 17. I would go immediately to a Luby's and open fire if I lost that. Also in the audience was Jello Biafra, who I didn't know then, who credits that show with changing his life. Now we work together as Lard. My two partners from Wax Trax [the Chicago-based record label] were also at that show. A lot of planets must have been aligned, because three or four years later, everyone is in Chicago working together. A bit of fate."

Despite his many endeavors, Ministry, on Sire/Warner Bros., has enjoyed the most success, and the lineup's slow, steady rise in popularity has thus far peaked with the release of *Psalm 69* and the singles "N.W.O." and "Jesus Built My Hotrod." Jourgensen enthusiastically explains the double-entendre album title. "It was taken from Crowley, who was a barrel of laughs, seriously, a jokester. The title is a play on words. The way to suck seed, like a slow job," he says, demonstrating with appropriate hand gestures, "and suck eggs, you know, a 69. And he had it under chapter 69 in his *Book of Lies*. That's the kind of stuff he did all the time, but no one got it. He snuck off of a tour of the great pyramid and had sex in the king's chamber with his wife. That's my kinda guy! Everyone takes him so hellfire seriously. He was a great mystic magician, but he was also a drug addict having fun."

Much like Jourgensen himself, perhaps? He nods. **"People take me way too seriously. People have lost their sense of parody. Peace, love and SKULLS!"** he says with a quiet grin.

While cover songs like Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy" (with a few new choice lyrics) and Olivia Newton-John's "Physical"—part of a master plan to "pick the ten worst rock songs ever written, and systematically destroy them"—show his wacky side via RevCo, the song and video for Ministry's drug-themed "Just One Fix," featuring a guest appearance by Burroughs, appears painfully autobiographical.

It's an upbeat, eloquent and positive Jourgensen this evening, however, despite an ongoing battle with Warner Bros.' video department, where, he notes, there doesn't seem to be intelligent life. Posino for a photographer in his dining area, Jourgensen balks when asked to put a gargyle in his mouth. He soon relents, quipping, "As long as it's not the genitalia of a record company executive, I'll put anything in my mouth." He poses obligingly, while a remix of "Just One Fix" blares at a volume that must have horrified his neighbors.

In less than a week, however, he'll be ensconced at the wood-paneled, mirrored-ceilinged and photo-walled residence that will house RevCo World, where he can blare as loud as he likes—and begin jamming for the next Ministry album. That's right, jam. Despite the seeming high-tech, mesmerizing cacophony that is Ministry's trademark, Jourgensen et al take a typically stonoe approach to song writing.

"We go in and bulk record, because if we go out and write specifically for something it's kinda contrived, so we just go in, a bunch of us, and jam or program or do whatever we have to do for months at a time, come out with a bulk amount of songs, whatever we feel like playing," he explains. "Some never see the light of day, and some of them we do, 'Hey, that sounds more like a Lard song, or a Cocks song,' but while we're writing, it's not for any specific demographic or band."

He takes the same instinctual approach to doing solo remixing work, and his resume includes one for the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Give It Away." Actually, admits Jourgensen, floating, "It was mixed by a chicken." Excuse me? "We were going nowhere with the mix, and I wasn't sure what to do with all the tracks, so my partner, Paul Barker, and I decided we needed divine power to decide which tracks to keep and which to record over. So being of Spanish descent, I decided to do the Santeria route. We sent the second engineer out to rent a chicken, because chickens are animals that are so fucking stupid that they absorb all bad energy, and the Santeria thing is to then chop off the head, which we don't want to do. We wanted the chicken to get the bad vibes out of the room so we could think viscerally. We got the chicken in there, tried to feed it some popcorn and beer. It didn't like that. So we got a bowl of granola, and the chicken goes apeshit over it," says Jourgensen, warming to the story. "Then we thought about the chicken's metabolism, and went 'uh-oh.' So I got the bright idea to put the chicken on the mixing desk and wherever it shits, we'd erase those channels. We knew the mix was over when we set the chicken up in front of the two big speakers on a podium and put a strobe light on, and when the chicken finally started going in beat with the music, we said: 'The mix is done; put it to tape.'"

There's another pause in the gains on at Chez Jourgensen as his

eight-year-old daughter and ex-wife drop by for a pre-Thanksgiving familial moment. The heavily tattooed singer turns tender around his progeny and presents her, a burgeoning anthropologist, with an ancient rock.

Though clearly an excellent, loving father—who attended a stage performance of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* with his daughter—he's as much a peer as a parent. "Most eight-year-olds are people, not these little things you have to be a fascist with," Jourgensen says. "She gets along great with her classmates, but anybody from skinheads to blue mohawks, to longhairs to Uncle Jello and Uncle Tim is no big deal. I brought her on stage at Lollapalooza, and she sings on the RevCo record."

She even helped him paint the large portrait of serial killer John Wayne Gacy that hangs opposite the sofa. "She just thinks it's a clown, which is the way it should be," he states. "But I do have a Henry Lee Lucas original," he adds, still on the serial murderer tip. "It's an idyllic little watercolor scene, and there were little windows in the cabin in the painting, and I was thinking, 'Well, if I could see in, maybe there would be a bunch of decapitated people inside the cabin.'"

It's thinking like that that makes Jourgensen so pleasantly twisted. And it's a twist that runs through every aspect of his life, which, thanks to his newfound sobriety, self-confidence and oft-expressed DIY and Think for Yourself attitudes, looks to be a long one.

Should he not achieve his plethora of goals and desires in this lifetime, which include getting tattooed while skydiving and racing Formula One cars, well, there's always a couple thousand years down the line. "I'm being frozen," Jourgensen says matter of factly. "Tim's [Leary] got me convinced. He's getting frozen, and I think I'm going to do it so we can pick up our conversation later."

He has no fear of the unknown. "The point is, if I'm not frozen, I'll wake up in 2,000 years or whatever in someone else's body, with some kind of weird deja vu of some fucked-up life I used to have being on some tour called *Line Up the Losers* or *Lotta Pollution*," he says without much irony. "They have all these budget plans, too—you can just get your brain frozen or your genitals. I can just visualize a whole race of people in the future that couldn't really afford their whole body frozen, so the males especially, being such a phallic-conscious society, just having the phallus frozen and the head, and attaching them, so they can just poog around, and it would be, 'Oh, that's a budget person from the Nineties.' Just a little concept. **THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM,**" he says.

It's approaching midnight, six hours after the interview began, and Jourgensen considers the fact that today is Thanksgiving. "Every day above ground is a good day. I've got a great daughter. I get to do what I like to do. Shit, who's complaining? My biggest trauma is whether this black," he says, fingering his T-shirt, "is too faded for this black," he laughs, referring to his jeans. "My Granimals! So Thanksgiving is a good day, except it's based on the thievery of indigenous population, so that's kind of gross. I don't need a turkey day to realize I got it pretty well made."

Clearly, Al is happy with Al, and while pals like Pearl Jam make the cover of *Time*, Jourgensen is content with Ministry's ten-years-in-the-making up and coming status. "It's been very slow in coming, but if we had sold as many records as Pearl Jam or someone years ago, I would have overdosed on something. I would have been a rock casualty for sure," he predicts. **"But I want to live. I feel like my best work hasn't been done yet."**

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