

Faces Magazine mid 1990
FAITH NO MORE
Something Weird This Way Comes
By Daina Darzin

"You're selling faster than Madonna," Warner Records exec Larry Butler is enthusing to Faith No More, wine glass held aloft. This somewhat odd scene is taking place at probably the best restaurant in Norfolk, Virginia, the site of the band's last club date before taking off for Australia. Returning, they'll open for Billy Idol and then possibly AC/DC. Their *The Real Thing* LP is gold and heading towards platinum fast; their single "Epic" is #6 with a bullet, as follow-up single "Falling to Pieces" breaks out big time.

The thing is, it's Faith No More that all this is happening to. You know, those critics' darlings voted Most Likely to Never Sell More Than 100,000 units by any industry "expert" you cared to ask. The music's too varied and peculiar, they said. The guys themselves not only look weird, they are kinda weird, and proud of it -- the furthest imaginable from your archetypical rock star. Bassist Billy Gould will tell you happily that he owns an original oil painting by serial killer John Wayne Gacy. Lead singer Mike Patton admits the adulation he receives from female fans embarrasses him and he insists on continuing with his band-on-the-side Mr. Bungle, despite Faith's success. Guitarist Jim Martin comes off like one of those quiet guys with evil on his mind (kinda like John Wayne Gacy...). Drummer Mike Bordin is a white guy with dreads any Rasta would envy. And if keyboardist Roddy Bottum seems normal at first glance, well, that's no proof of anything. In the midst of short-haired, military-minded Norfolk -- let's put it this way, the souvenir coffee cups feature pictures of battleships -- these guys seem like they're from Mars.

The 1000 or so kids that have gathered in front of the Tracks in Ward's Corner Mall (in 90 degree heat) don't give a shit what the industry predicted. They don't care that President George Bush is in town, dedicating some piece of military hardware, either. Seeing FNM is much more important. They break into loud screams and cheers as the band emerges from the back of the store, where they've donned Tracks aprons and name tags, just like the salespeople.

"It's all girls!" Billy says, surprised.

"That's a good sign," says Mike Bordin with a laugh, and points out two scuzzy-looking fat dudes as an example of their former typical fan.

The Faith guys sit below their banner and sign countless autographs. Notebook paper. FNM pinups from magazines. Dollar bills. Clothing. Flesh. Jim always insists on signing girls' jeans across the butt, clearly enjoying himself. "That's his thrill for the tour," road manager Mark O'Donnell laughs. "He looks like Robert Downey Jr.," a fan squeals about Mike Patton.

After writers' cramp has set in and the crowd has dispersed, Mark utters the magic words, "Shall we go shopping?" Part of FNM's deal for the in-store is a dozen free CDs each, and they take full advantage, demonstrating in the process just how all-inclusive their musical taste is. Ice Cube. Nick Cave. Elvis Presley. Pink Floyd. Rush. A straggler from the in-store crowd gets to give Mike Patton a hug and dissolves into paroxysms of giggles.

Not all of the tour has been this upbeat. Just recently, in St. Martinsburg, some mean-spirited dudes got backstage; when Mark asked them to leave they said, "well, we'll just trash your bus instead" and promptly got into a fight with security that resulted in various broken bones and much drama. Mark looks understandably beleaguered when he recounts the incident; the band members, however, seem to thrive on this sort of thing. Billy Gould says one of his favorite Faith shows of all time was the infamous one opening for Metallica in Salt Lake City: "We got a really bad reaction," he remembers once, "which really gets us excited. So I did this bass solo that went on for about two minutes on just one note. The spit was flying, people were so mad, hating it so much -- it was the greatest feeling, 10,000 people wanting to kill you!"

Their life used to be like that, too. "We had this experiment once where we didn't clean our house for a year," Billy recalls. "He had a mouse living in his clothes, and a million cockroaches," Roddy adds. "But we were on our own, doing it our way.

"We had these outrageous pot parties -- we had a party the first day, and a year later when we moved out, there were still beer bottles around from that party." And there was this chicken, left outside for a loooong time.

"It was pulsating," Mike Patton says cheerfully.

"Maggots breathing in unison," Billy explains. Mind you, they're telling this story in the middle of the main course at the aforementioned fancy restaurant. Other dinner table conversation turns to the Jonestown Massacre, the recent earthquake in the Phillipines, and more serial killers (an interest Gould shares with your faithful reporter. Journalists are sick too!).

Then, it's back to the Holiday Inn to get ready to go to this evening's show at the Boathouse. (The joint used to be just that -- it's a huge cavernous wood structure; the audience is one big pit.) "The lady in the gift shop is so cool!" Roddy announces. "She said she bought the Danzig record and told me about the Cramps and the Ramones staying here." The band promptly gives the (very straight-looking, middle-aged) women passes to the show.

"It's gonna be a HOT ONE," Jim Martin says ominously. We're on the bus now, outside the venue. Some kind of Vietnam movie is on the TV with the sound off. Screeching from the CD player is Diamanda Galas, the creepy avant-weird performance artist who sounds kind of like Slayer's insane, satanic grandmother. "The devil's wife," someone calls her FNM love Diamanda Galas. There's a nice

bottle of champagne and a card from Warner Bros., and the bus is a lavish one. Right before they make their grand entrance, they switch CDs to Frank Sinatra singing "New York, New York."

The devil's wife was a more appropriate intro to the show. "A hot one" doesn't begin to describe it. It's a veritable steam bath, and a couple kids from the front row have already fainted by the time FNM go on. (The opening band is Circus of Power.) They continue to faint throughout the show; Mark O' Donnell shifts into crisis mode for the remainder of the evening, hauling limp bodies out of the pit and reviving them. Between songs, he and security guys throw buckets of water on the audience. Someone periodically holds up a hand in front of the air conditioning vent to see if any cold air is coming out (it isn't). In midst, Mike Patton trashes his mike in disgust. "I got shocked really bad with this fucking piece of shit microphone," he announces to the crowd. It happens again. "I'm going to kill the equipment company," a roadie mumbles backstage.

It makes you think, how much artists and fans are willing to endure for the love of rock n' roll. Because through all this, it's still a great show, ample proof of exactly why FNM is making it big. They are fierce and passionate and original, propelled by a totally sincere belief in what they're doing. If anyone deserves the stardom they're now enjoying (at least part time), it's them.

They're taking off for Kennedy Airport in New York tonight, in preparation for flying to Australia. Billy Gould insists he wants to go swimming, though. My last glance of FNM is from my hotel window, of Billy sitting exhausted in the dark, there in the welcome cold of the Holiday Inn pool