

Entertainment

Radio fans cry for mercy

English band finds a home on college airwaves



"Cult"-bound: Since the release of their third album, *Vision Thing*, steadily increasing requests have landed Sisters of Mercy a solid spin on a host of college radio stations.

(CPS) - Stare, for a moment, into the fire. Look past the flames, to the embers burning ever so brightly, performing the mesmerizing final dance of their short lives as they turn and soar toward their infinite sleep, burning ever toward darkness. That's the dark, somber sound of The Sisters of Mercy.

With the release of *Vision Thing*, the band's third album, The Sisters is building upon a cult status that has elevated vocalist Andrew Eldritch, his work, and his offstage antics to near-mythical proportions.

Eldritch, who has a deep, growling, tortured vocal style, is the brains behind The Sisters of Mercy, as well as its founder, songwriter and constant focal point.

He started it all in 1980 in Leeds, England.

"There was a gap," Eldritch explains. "Everybody in London, which is where the whole English music industry is, was promoting at the time, very much like they are today, in fact, a rather hideous blend of cocktail and disco music. 'Nobody I knew up in Northern England could relate to that,' he remembers. "We had our own different thing going."

So Eldritch, along with original guitarist Gary Marx, formed The Sisters of Mercy.

"We had a fuzz bass, a very cheap drum machine, and I used to shout a lot through an echo machine," he recalled. "People

really got off on it."

A few months later, "Damage Done," the Sisters' first single, was released on their own Merciful Release label, to instant acceptance.

"We spent the following 10 years trying to keep as much of that as possible," says Eldritch of the early sound, "while fitting it into song at the same time, which is not easy."

Eldritch originally got into music, he says, "because it seemed the natural thing to do if you were a punk rocker. Everybody was in a band then. Someone asked me to play on their record, so I did and it just kind of grew from there."

"Long after that," Eldritch continued, "people started saying, 'Andrew, you're actually quite good at certain elements of this,' and people started encouraging me. That's when we started taking it seriously. That would have been about 1982, when we started realizing the potential power of what we had."

A handful of singles and live performances won the Sisters a small, though loyal European following, prompting Warner Brothers to offer the band worldwide distribution of the band's records in 1984.

The spring of 1985 saw the release of the self-titled Sisters' debut album, which jumped immediately into the U.K. Top 20 album chart, yielding a number of hit

singles in the process.

It wouldn't be until two-and-a-half years later, with the 1987 release of the single "This Corrosion," that the Sisters would become known stateside.

The alternative music scene happily embraced *The Sisters of Mercy*, the album release that followed. The enigmatic *Floodland* came next, selling a respectable 200,000 copies in the U.S. market and providing college radio with two additional hit singles, "Dominion" and "Lucretia My Reflection."

Of *Vision Thing*, Eldritch says, "it's loud and it's exciting and it's very funny."

Shooting more than a few poetic arrows at both American and English cultures, *Vision Thing* is a creative reflection of the ills of a world gone awry.

But Eldritch maintains he's not trying to wake people up with his startling lyrics and apocalyptic vision. "I don't think that there's much that you can do. I just make a soundtrack for people who feel the same way that I do."

"I don't think that rock music, certainly not the way that I do it, is in the business of converting people or persuading them of anything that they don't know already. One, I think that that's a conceited thing to do, and secondly, I just don't think that I'm very good at it."

Up Close With...



Laurie A. O'Sullivan

Name: Laurie Ann O'Sullivan.

Birthdate: January 23, 1965.

Birthplace: Staten Island, New York.

Current job position: Coordinator, Campus Residential Life.

Very first job: Waitress in a coffee shop (at the age of 12).

Secret vice: Bubble baths by candlelight.

Three things that can always be found in your refrigerator: Hershey's Chocolate Syrup, popcorn, wheat bread.

Movie you could see again any time: It's a Wonderful Life.

Book you could read again any time: "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens.

Whom you would most like to have dinner with: Kevin Costner.

Your ultimate dream vacation: A trip to a secluded cabin in New Hampshire - equipped with a fireplace - in the wintertime.

What actress would you have portray yourself in a movie based on your life?: Shelley Long.

Behrend's best kept secret: No, I'm not a student; I actually do work here!

Accomplishment you are proudest of: I paid my own way through college and grad. school.

People may be surprised to know that: I write poetry for Blue Mountain Arts (Greeting Card Company).

Things you could do without: People who don't recycle, mornings, credit card bills, gossip.

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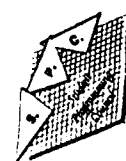


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