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BACKSTAGE

EPICS

Featuring

DIAMONDS

IT WAS THE
SIMPLEST OF
MOTIVATIONS,
RIGHT OFF
THE BAT.

LIFE IS
BORING.

SO
I GOT
BORED.

MY BEGINNINGS WERE
NOTHING SPECIAL,
AND I GUESS THEREIN
LIES THE KEY TO
UNDERSTANDING ME.

I WAS GOOD AT SPORTS, MOSTLY
WITHOUT HAVING TO TRY TOO HARD.
AND I WAS BLANDLY HANDSOME, AND
BECAUSE OF THESE TWO FACTS I
ENDED UP BEING ONE OF THE MORE
POPULAR KIDS AT SCHOOL.

I COULD HAVE
COASTED IT
COMFORTABLY INTO
A LIFE WITHOUT
CONFLICT.
IVY LEAGUE, WIFE
AND KIDS, WHAT
HAVE YOU.

BUT LIKE I SAID,
I WAS BORED.

AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT,
MY FRIEND ADDY, ONE OF SIX
BLACK KIDS IN MY CLASS,
PLAYED ME A RAP RECORD
BY A BUNCH OF HARD-
FROM SOUTH CENTRAL
L.A. CALLED N.W.A.

WITHIN SIX MONTHS, I HAD
BEGUN TO MASTER THE ART OF
FREESTYLING. NOTHING SPAT IN
THE FACE OF MY UPBRINGING QUITE
LIKE SKIPPING SCHOOL TO GO
HANG OUT IN THE PROJECTS, DRINK
LIQUOR, AND RAP-BATTLE DUPES
WHO DEALT CRACK FOR A LIVING.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG
FOR MY CRAPPLY
RECORDED MIX TAPE,
RELEASED UNDER
THE MONIKER
"DIAMONDS" TO
DO THE ROUNDS AND
END UP IN THE HANDS
OF THE POWERFUL
HIP-HOP SUBSIDIARY
OF A MAJOR LABEL.



THIS WAS NOT THE ACCEPTANCE LETTER TO BROWN MY PARENTS WERE EXPECTING, BUT IN MY MIND? ■■■■■ 'EM.

AS SOON AS I BEGAN RECORDING MY DEBUT LP, I KNEW I WASN'T BRED TO PLAY BY THE RULES OF MY LABEL. I WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO RECORD THE MOST OFFENSIVE, UNCOMPROMISING, AND FOUL HIP-HOP MUSIC EVER PLACED ON WAX.

TO MY CHAGRIN, BECAUSE I WAS A MARKETABLE YOUNG WHITE BOY, THE REACTION TO THIS WAS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE OF MY INTENTION. POP STATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY EMBRACED MY MUSIC AND I WAS LAUNCHED INTO THE STRATOSPHERE OF TABLOID SENSATIONALISM.

AFTER A MOVE TO NEW YORK, I RELEASED AN INCREASINGLY ERRATIC SUCCESSION OF MATERIAL TO TRY TO OFFSET THE PLACIDITY OF POP-HIP-HOP.

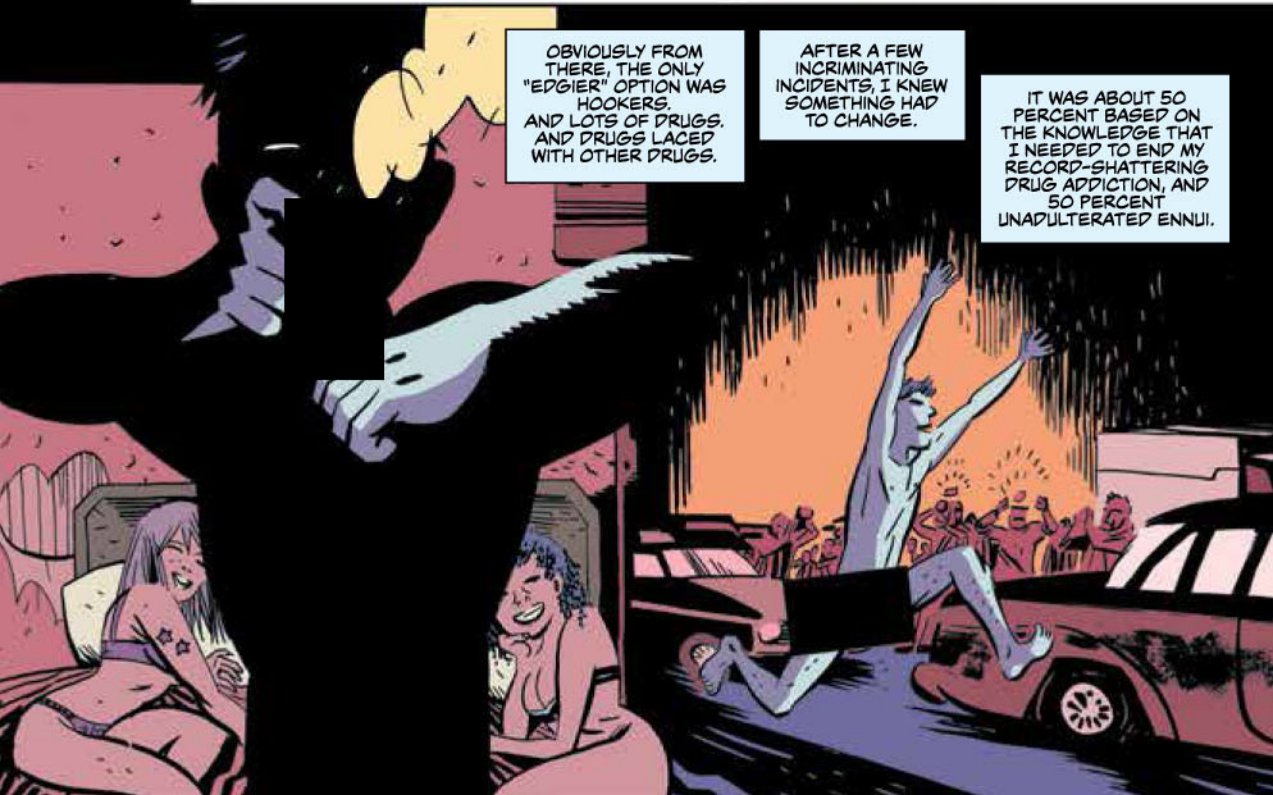
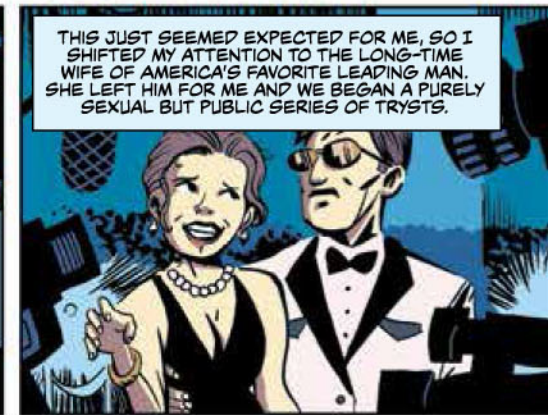
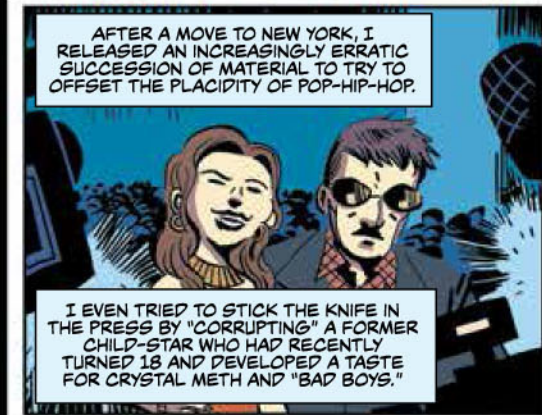
I EVEN TRIED TO STICK THE KNIFE IN THE PRESS BY "CORRUPTING" A FORMER CHILD-STAR WHO HAD RECENTLY TURNED 18 AND DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR CRYSTAL METH AND "BAD BOYS."


THIS JUST SEEMED EXPECTED FOR ME, SO I SHIFTED MY ATTENTION TO THE LONG-TIME WIFE OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE LEADING MAN. SHE LEFT HIM FOR ME AND WE BEGAN A PURELY SEXUAL BUT PUBLIC SERIES OF TRYSTS.

OBVIOUSLY FROM THERE, THE ONLY "EDGIER" OPTION WAS HOOKERS, AND LOTS OF DRUGS, AND DRUGS LACED WITH OTHER DRUGS.

AFTER A FEW INCRIMINATING INCIDENTS, I KNEW SOMETHING HAD TO CHANGE.


IT WAS ABOUT 50 PERCENT BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I NEEDED TO END MY RECORD-SHATTERING DRUG ADDICTION, AND 50 PERCENT UNADULTERATED ENNUI.





PEOPLE AREN'T REALLY AWARE THAT THERE'S AN OVERLAP BETWEEN "GANGSTA" CULTURE AND THE "STRAIGHT EDGE" HARDCORE COMMUNITY. SCARY DUPES WHO ROLL DEEP WITH OTHER SCARY DUPES AND BEAT UP PEOPLE WHO SMOKE POT AT SHOWS.

MY FRIEND ALBERTO INTRODUCED ME TO MINOR THREAT AND YOUTH OF TODAY AND, IN THE WAKE OF BEING DROPPED BY MY LABEL FOR NOT TURNING A RECORD IN FOUR YEARS, I DECIDED I NEEDED A MAJOR CHANGE IN VOCATION.

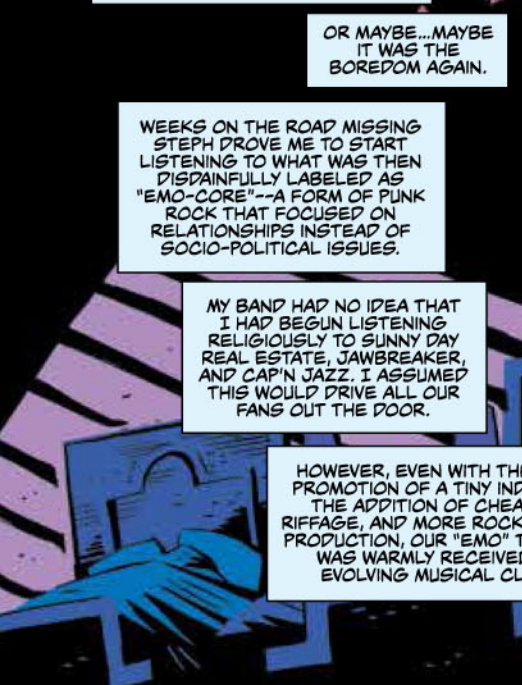


I FORMED AN ACTUAL BAND, A HARDCORE BAND, WHICH WE DECIDED TO SUBVERSIVELY TITLE "DIE-MONDS."

THINGS WERE GOOD FOR A WHILE. I WAS CLEAN AND PLAYING SHOWS TO ANGRY, SOBER KIDS STUFFED INTO DIRTY CLUBS AND VFW HALLS, LOOKING FOR A FIGHT.




I EVEN FELL IN LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME. SHE WAS A HOT VEGAN CHICK NAMED STEPH, AND SHE OWNED ME, BODY AND SOUL.



MAYBE IT WAS MY IMMERSION IN "TRUE LOVE" THAT CHANGED ME, OR MAYBE I GOT SICK OF WATCHING GUYS PUSH WOMEN AROUND AND BEAT UP SKINNY KIDS IN THE NAME OF SO-CALLED "SUBVERSION," BUT HARDCORE STARTED TO APPEAR TO ME AS A PERVERSELY HYPOCRITICAL BOYS' CLUB.

OR MAYBE...MAYBE IT WAS THE BOREDOM AGAIN.

WEEKS ON THE ROAD MISSING STEPH DROVE ME TO START LISTENING TO WHAT WAS THEN DISPAINFULLY LABELED AS "EMO-CORE"--A FORM OF PUNK ROCK THAT FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIPS INSTEAD OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES.



MY BAND HAD NO IDEA THAT I HAD BEGUN LISTENING RELIGIOUSLY TO SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE, JAWBREAKER, AND CAP'N JAZZ. I ASSUMED THIS WOULD DRIVE ALL OUR FANS OUT THE DOOR.

HOWEVER, EVEN WITH THE LIMITED PROMOTION OF A TINY INDIE LABEL, THE ADDITION OF CHEAP TRICK RIFFAGE, AND MORE ROCK-ORIENTED PRODUCTION, OUR "EMO" TRANSITION WAS WARMLY RECEIVED BY AN EVOLVING MUSICAL CLIMATE.

THIS, OF COURSE, AGAIN DREW THE ATTENTION OF MAJOR LABELS.



WE CELEBRATED SIGNING TO THE LARGEST MAJOR LABEL DEAL IN YEARS BY SMOKING POT TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME AS A BAND.

SOMEONE PUT ON BOWIE AND WE LOST OURSELVES IN THE MUSIC.

THE NIGHT ENDED WITH US SCREWING EACH OTHER WITH ABANDON.

MY LOVE FOR STEPH DIDN'T SEEM TO ENTER INTO THINGS AS MUCH AFTER THAT.

MY NEED TO ALIENATE MY FAN-BASE CONTINUED WILLFULLY YET UNSUCCESSFULLY OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

WE WERE STONED ENOUGH TO PUT OUT A CLASSIC ROCK-INFUSED RECORD WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE MADE A BIG-PRODUCTION POP-PUNK CROSSOVER.

WHEN THAT RECORD WENT PLATINUM IN LIGHT OF THE STROKES AND THE WHITE STRIPES' SUCCESS, WE STRIPPED EVERYTHING DOWN TO BANJOS AND DULCIMER, AND MADE A NOISEY, DENSE LO-FI FOLK RECORD.

THERE WASN'T A SONG ON THAT RECORD UNDER SEVEN MINUTES. NOT A SINGLE CHORUS.

WE WON THE ~~GRAMMY~~ GRAMMY.

AWARDS

ONE THING I HADN'T TRIED WAS ESTRANGING MY OWN BAND.

ON AN LCD SOUNDSYSTEM AND JOY DIVISION TEAR, I MOVED TO BROOKLYN, CHANGED THE NAME OF THE "PROJECT" BACK TO DIAMONDS AND BEGAN TO SET MYSELF UP AS AN INDIE-NEW-WAVE INFUSED SOLO ACT "BACKED" BY MY PREVIOUS BAND.

THEY WERE TOO COKED UP TO EVEN NOTICE.

WHEN "INDIE" BECAME THE NEW POP, I UNINTENTIONALLY PRODUCED A NUMBER ONE HIT SONG.

THAT'S WHERE THINGS STARTED TO GET A BIT MESSED UP.

