

Mike
Pelligrino
of

Spring Heeled JACK^{USA}

Conducted by Dan Kress & Alex Wegner
10.10.98 SUNY Oswego for Hoi Polloi! Skazine

Interview with Reel Big Fish take one. What's your name? Are you the fry guy?

FG: Yes.

Alright, this is my first...

FG: (*Interrupts*) Are you stoned?

Slightly. (laughter) Now I know you're the lead singer and guitarist, I just... what?

FG: I'm not with Reel Big Fish, you know that right?

Oh yea, that's the reason that we're doing the interview. Um just state your name.

My name is Mike from Spring Heeled Jack USA.

Cool. Is that SHJ U-S-A?

It is now.

Because...

We had to modify, switch, and change it because of the other band.

Aw that cheesy ass acid jazz band?

Yeah, its like jungle techno. Do you know John Bates stuff? It's um... well I guess they do what they do well, because they sell a decent amount of albums. People like them who like that kind of music.

So you changed it?

We own the name, but for us to keep Spring Heeled Jack and for them to have to change their name wouldn't help us out at all. They already are on Island Records, so they already have albums distributed all over the globe, and we don't yet. We just have our first album sent to Japan and parts of South America.

The Moon Ska album, 'Static World View' (1996)

Yeah. For the most part we're just continental US and they added a suffix UK even though they're HEEL, and we added USA to ours. It's not really a name change proper we don't say that, it's more of a modification and we just think of it as a tag now. To make a distinction, because there's a lot of people coming to the shows thinking we're the techno band.

Really? You mean you don't play techno? Oops, we thought you were the other band. [laughter]

No joke. We get a show, played in Austin TX and there was like 5 people there. We're like 'Oh my god we drove all the way out here from CT'. Maybe not for one show, but you drive out there and you're like alright, Austin Texas! we play and its like wow no one's there. And we saw this whole group of people coming up outside, a good amount; 2 carfuls of people coming out and they were like oh no.

We watched them walk away, we asked ourselves what's up, why did they all leave? Later, we talked to the club and they said oh I guess they thought you guys were the other band. We were shocked! Like fuck, we gotta do something! (*laughter*)

Where are they from?

They're from England

Spring Heeled Jack UK

No spring heel. like EEEEE. It's a sort of legend over there. Spring Heel Jack is sort of a semi-mythical figure from late 19th century Ireland. A kind of Jack The Ripper of the north if you will.

Wow, historical relevance. I know you had a one album contract with Moon, the video, and then you jumped to Ignition where you are currently.

Yes.

But do you think you can do anything else with Moon, Or is that relationship pretty much passed?

Yeah, I think we will do something with Moon again soon. Um, I mean we have no plans set at this moment. I'd like to do, start doing some 7" vinyl records coming up within the rest of 98 & into the coming year 1999 of um demo songs we haven't put out yet.

Like stuff off of CT SKA?

We'll put most stuff.. When we go on demo songs, we go to this place in Wallingford called JoeTown, and we'll just go in, set down a decent version of the song, you don't really pay attention to how tight everything is, just to get the parts down and everything, so we can get a decent tape to listen to. We've realized when working on songs, it's helpful to listen to a song as a listener, instead of a guy in the band playing it. You hear it a little differently and so you get to critique it a little better, so we do that. And in doing so, we have a lot of good versions of songs that will never make it on to our CD because of quality purposes; it's not as tight, not as full you know? Well whatever. Vocal performance is not great, but it's all live, so it's not refined. I think they sound really good, they're raw. I like the demo versions in some cases better than the studio versions because of that. So the intention is there to release those on 7" records with a whole bunch of cover songs that we've been meaning to do. Covers that we'll probably never put on a proper album because of stupid copyright reasons, because you "can't do that". You have to pay people royalties

and we don't want to, so... (*laughter*) I think I'd like to put some 7"s out on Moon. I think that would be a fun thing to do. They help us out so much, but we just needed to move on, that's all.

With the trend of the best bands leaving Moon, will you be going to Hellcat?

(*laughter*) No, we're not going. No the best bands...

Well, some of the best bands.

A lot of the best bands leave Moon because that label is a business nightmare. It's like, I don't know if it's run well... I think it's run okay, its just that they're kind of unorganized, and they don't have... Like bands get jerked out of their money and they're told they sold this many albums when really they sold 3,000 more albums... And who the hell knows where that money goes? and its like...

Checking out the books takes 2 weeks to do.

Yeah, a couple bands we know have had to do that. They've found out they sold 6,000 more albums than they thought they did. It's like six thousand more bucks. If that was a dollar each, the band gets six thousand more bucks; that's a grand per member in some of these ska bands... It's ridiculous.

A good friend of mine was in a band, they got signed to be distributed. I won't name names, but it was a lesser known band and he was telling me they got dicked out of some money when they were on 'Spawn of Skarmageddon', something like that too. You guys were on that.. Or no, that was the first one.

We were on the first one, the double disc, or.. They're all double discs right? Yeah that was fun. The deal with that was we were gonna get, we've since gotten a coupla royalty checks on those albums, but instead of getting royalty checks, what we usually do is ask for the equivalent in cost of CDs. So if we were gonna get paid \$500, each CD is 10\$ we'd get 50 cds, sell them at shows for 15\$, and make more. We've gotten into practice doing that. We've gone through a couple boxes of those since, but I don't think we'll ever see any money from our album since we split. Now our older album is selling because people are buying the new one and going hunting for the old one. You know, the ol'back catalogue.

Yes because that Moon Record was just phenomenal, I loved it.

Thanks, man. Even the new one... It's a little less ska, a little more other stuff but it's still good music.

Wait the old one, is the one with he cartoon cover?

The big fuckin' videogame guy cover.

I see that you dropped alot of the Star Wars imagery stuff for the new

album.

Yeah, we got.. Well we didn't get sued by Lucasfilm or anything, but we were approached and it was like... for real.

Was it for that cool-ass tshirt of Darth Vader skankin'? I have that, it's kick ass.

Aw, it's fuckin' great. Yeah and Rick [Omonte], our bass player] put the tour dates in the back man, he put alot of time and thought into that. He included every single planet in the Star Wars galaxy.

And the last one is Tune Inn (the noted ska venue in Connecticut)

And you know what, he actually did it in such a way that you know, during that era those planets are set in specific sectors of space. Space is divided up into sectors, and planets like Corellia & Kashik, where Han Solo & Chewbacca are from, those two planets are in the same sector so he put those closer to each other. And he left spaces & days off inbetween sectors so we could travel at light speed.

(D) Ha ha. Do you have to go through the movies to research this shirt?

Rick.. Rick's got all the books.

(A) There's entire books predicated upon the trilogy, Dan. I see you were supposed to play the Death Star but that blew up.

Yeah, that gig was cancelled. Alderon was cancelled. Tattoonie we just don't play that much anymore, just because no one shows up. You know except for the summer festivals.

What about Degobah?

M: Degobah's nice, always a nice muggy show.

And the Ewok Village? How's that being up...

Up in the trees? Fantastic! You know there's always a couple stagediving accidents, but that's okay. It kind of goes with the territory.

Are you anti-crowd surfing?

My theory is this. Everybody pays the same amount to get into a show, and if people like to dive, do that stuff, or if people don't like to get hit on the head with people, they should move to another part, because in another part people do dancing and things like that, Everybody finds their own spot, it just takes a little while of going to shows.

Does your bassist still book all the band's concert dates, or now that you're on Ignition...

What do you mean by dates for the shows? Booking? No, we go through ICM Agency and they've been great. Rick did it initially, then we went through Ariel Publicity. We were one of the first bands she booked.

'Cause I remember I saw you guys at NYU with The Pietasters and The Toasters.

I remember that show, I got there like 30 seconds before we were supposed to go on.

I was like run run run, hurry up! I was like 'oh my god'...

Rick said he did all the booking then, but that was near 2 years ago.

At that point in time he did. Since then we've gone through 2 booking agencies. ICM is great, very professional and they have a good repertoire, so they're able to get good venues.

Rumor has it that you enjoy professional wrestling. You enjoy watching, performing imitations of professional wrestling.

It's not exactly me so much, I don't mind it. Some of the band, Peter & the brass, they're called The NWO Horns.

Really? Are the horn section band geeks? From high school?

The horn section is... bandgeeks, yes.

I know alot of high school band geeks who like professional wrestling, so. I was just wondering if it was a common thing.

This is standard pressure?

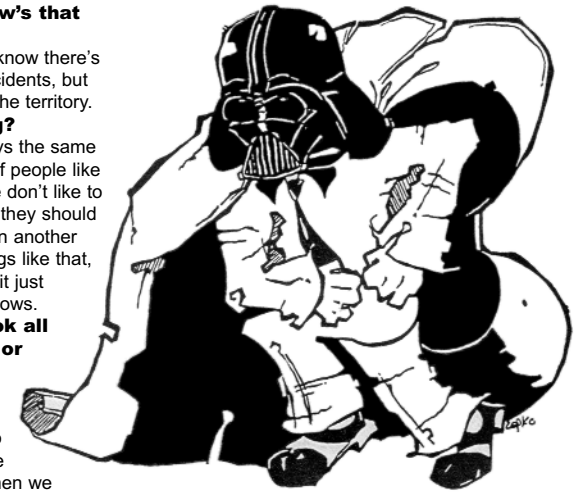
When you take a shit, do you crumple, roll or fold the toilet paper?

Say again? I fold because I wipe, then fold in half again, then wipe again. It's actually complex.

I do a variation. Thanks again.

THE END.

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