

# MEET THE RESIDENTS



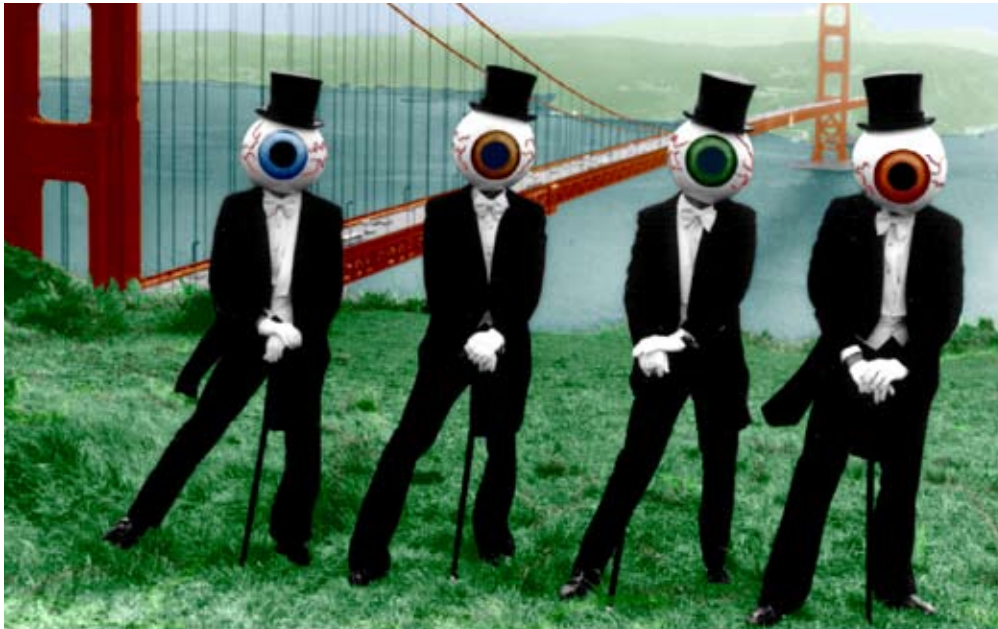
## THE PARASITIC GRIP OF THE WHITE BLOODSUCKER

Let your mind drift back to simpler, more pathetic times... to an age when American teenagers jitterbugged in plastic hula hoops to the savage jungle rhythm of payola'd rock 'n' roll, and spent their parents' hard-earned pay on Kookie combs and Jughead comics... when Ozzie choked in the basement rumpus room on a piece of Harriet's fudge, and Rick and Dave kicked at each other on the patio, pausing only for a healthful grape drink break... after which they would retreat to their rooms to masturbate with Tales From the Crypt while wearing cardboard 3-D glasses. The Residents themselves grew up in all this, but their early memories are clouded by small-town Louisiana swamp gas, where they spent their formative years like normal average white American southern children on a diet of Jello, peanut butter, and Kool-Aid. They recall their youth only vaguely. One remembers listening to his parents' ancient records, such as "Mississippi Mud", a 1927 recording by the Rhythm Boys (with Bing Crosby). The rest just mumble unenthusiastically about nameless arteriosclerotic country and western. The various crew didn't even discover each

other until high school, where they giggled nervously about each other's warped points of view. They told naughty jokes and made surreptitious fart noises to show their budding alienation, but somehow it wasn't enough. They mostly managed to pull down barely respectable grades, and they shunned joining the few high school organizations which would accept them. They listened to the radio a lot, and said things like "Pass the drool cup" when attractive members of the opposite sex strolled by. They watched *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* as a true story and warning to us all, and after too many hours of Uncle `Miltie' on a circular black-and-white TV screen, they retreated to their secret clubhouse out on the bayou and played their crappy little 45's over and over until they had memorized the scratches on all of them. They listened to the wheezes of the alligators floating languidly by the reeds, and read and re-read their "bible": J.D. Salinger's *Catcher In The Rye*. "Houlden Caulfield is a Resident," one of them says. And Salinger, interestingly enough, leads a reclusive, partially demented existence much like The Residents. It has even been rumored that J.D. Salinger performs on one of The Residents' early records, but this cannot be verified.

## GRUNT EVASION, EARLY STRATEGIES, AND HOW THE RESIDENTS GOT THEIR NAME

After high school, the gang (which numbered five) split up and went their various ways - college, grunt jobs, draft evasion. They kept in touch with each other's progress, however, and soon found themselves hopping like rabid Rhesus monkeys to rhythm and blues-particularly James Brown and Bo Diddley. James Brown's Live at the Apollo is an album which makes them quiver to this day. But they soon found that they needed each other, and re-grouped to plot strategy. They didn't know what the hell they were doing, but they knew James Brown made their butts twitch, and some how it would all work out. In 1966 or so, after a couple of them had made it almost all the way through college, they decided to escape the slimy Southern scourge of George Wallace. So they loaded up their truck and headed straight for San Francisco, where they had heard all the go-go mod action was goin' down. As fate would have it, their truck broke down in a quiet suburban town called San Mateo, some 25 miles south of the big city. Behind them they left a few loyal, more balanced acquaintances who would later follow to start The Cryptic Corporation. In California they saw the minds around them already beginning to break down. Youngsters everywhere were growing their hair out and joining the "bushhead" movement. Beach boys frolicked with trained wild seals on the sand, and



local cretins began electrocuting themselves with guitars on-stage while thousands chanted, "You endorse our mindless lives," in unified spontaneity. Charles Manson pierced his nipple with a Love button while on acid, and the Psychedelic Revolution was born. The Residents began licking their lips. • At this point the story breaks down. While living in sleepy San Mateo, some "trick of fate"-as they put it-gave them

access to musical instruments and an impressive array of tape recording equipment at the same time, and they were on their way. "The tape recorders were more important than the instruments," says a Resident. They did a lot of jamming, mainly to amuse themselves, and rumors began leaking to a small coterie of outsiders that something of possible interest was going on here. In 1970 they began editing the tapes and playing them for skeptical friends at parties and fiestas. They sent one of these tapes to a dwindling group of pals in Louisiana, and got back four bubbling, enthusiastic replies, barely legible in their cacographic scrawls, but with enough exclamation points to let The Residents know that they had struck a nerve.

"Let us manage you," one of the letters said-the first overture of the impending Cryptic Corporation had begun. At this time, our boys still had no name for themselves. They considered calling themselves the New Beatles for a while, but prudence told them this was not a wise choice. In the meantime, they shrugged their shoulders a lot and plotted how to break into the biz. They finally got their name, as the

legend goes, from Hal Haverstadt, an exec at Warner Brothers Records. Haverstadt worked with Captain Beefheart, and the nameless quintet figured that anyone

who could relate to Beefheart might possibly understand what they were up to. So off they mailed an album's worth of material, replete with title-The Warner Bros. Album-cover art, and wacko liner notes. They signed no name, just a return address. Haverstadt mailed the tape back weeks later, addressed to "Residents" and thus began the most significant pop music ensemble of the 20th century. Legend has it that around this time, a then unknown British musician by the name of Philip Lithman showed up at The Residents' door with the Mysterious N. Senada, an acquaintance whom he had met in Bavaria, while on an expedition there from Britain. What has since come to light, however, is just as remarkable. It seems that Lithman had come from his home in England to California in search of the thriving musical renaissance that was supposedly taking place in and around San Francisco, when he bumped into N. Senada, who told him about these chaps who were involved in some interesting musical experimentation. Intrigued, Philip accompanied Senada on his quest to seek out these fellow Adventists, and the rest is history. For The Residents, the result of this untimely meeting has been a close and

prosperous relationship with Snakefinger, and a deep respect for Senada, who has since kicked The Residents in the right direction on numerous occasions. It was at this point, when The Residents had firmed up their musical relationships with these two influential individuals, that the infamous, shocking *Baby Sex* was recorded, whose astounding sounds live up to its unsettling cover. The Residents-perhaps wisely-did not unleash it upon the public. In 1971 Ralph Records was formed by The Residents to give themselves an outlet for their creative endeavors.



"Ralph" was an in-house slang term for "dog", as well as a verb from high school drinking days: "call ralph" meant "to vomit." The significance of this is dubious, but sorta interesting to the smut-minded linguistic scholar.

## THE GREAT DIM SUM RIOT OF 1974

The 1,000 Meet The Residents albums which were initially pressed slowly began to wake up several isolated weirdos across the country, and soon The Residents had gained a sought-after "sub-cult" status. But back in San Francisco tensions were mounting among

these creative oddballs and in the summer of 1976 the group almost split up. The easily-irked Residents finally resolved their conflicts after a horribly embarrassing food fight in Chinatown by closeting themselves in the studio and recording *Not Available*. For the recording they came up with their famous Theory of Obscurity, which allowed them to be completely uninhibited about their problems and thus work them out. The Theory posited an obscure directive which said

**"IGNORANCE OF YOUR CULTURE IS NOT CONSIDERED COOL"**

that *Not Available* could not be released until they had forgotten its very existence. Towards the end of the *Not Available* sessions, when tensions had eased and their creative juices had once again started

to boil, The Residents began work on *The Third Reich 'N' Roll*, a project which became a landmark in American pop music. Then, in September of '76, The Residents condensed all that they had mustered for *Third Reich 'N' Roll* to make one pulsating, mind-throbbing 45: a cover version of the Rolling Stones' classic, "Satisfaction." The result was one of the most powerful records ever made. It featured the stunning twirl action guitar of Snakefinger, who had become a Residents associate ever since those early days in San Mateo. At this time Ralph Records

he left behind his immortal portrayal of a midget Al Jolson in blackface singing "Mammy" in *Vileness Fats*.

## THE AIRTIGHT ALIBIS OF MEN WITH PLASTIC BAG OVER THEIR HEADS

The Residents rarely perform live. In fact, only three actual performances can be confirmed. The first took place on October 18, 1971, on *Audition Night* at the *Boarding House* in San Francisco when The Residents, accompanied by the Mysteri-

ous Nigel Senada and Snakefinger, stormed the stage in a blitzkrieg invasion and stunned the helplessly drunken audience with a half-hour performance. First Senada warmed up the audience with poetry and a wild saxophone solo, then on came The Residents, with Margaret Smik as Peggy Honeydew wailing away on inflamed vocals. It was all captured on videotape while the dumbfounded audience grew alarmed and sweaty. On Halloween the same year they staged another mysterious impromptu performance at a celebration held in the small town of Arcata in northern California. Interestingly enough, some portions of this event were recorded and included on the *Baby Sex* album. The final performance was in 1976 at an anniversary party for *Rather Ripped Records*, a record store in Berkeley which also happened to be the first store with the foresight to support



also released a little-known single by a fellow called Schwump, a mad percussionist from Portland, Oregon. Schwump had impressed The Residents and the Cryptics with his full-length frog opera, and his demented autoharp styling, so they backed him up on the quirky "Aphids in the Hall." But Schwump proved a difficult guy to work with, and he eventually jettisoned himself from sight in a murky cloud of squid ink and hasn't been heard from since. But

## "WHY DO THE RESIDENTS HATE THE BEATLES?"

The Residents and was for a long time the only outlet to stock their albums. Snakefinger, dressed as a giant artichoke, played an unrecognizable "Satisfaction," while a couple of characters portraying Arf and Omega, the Siamese twin tag-team wrestlers from Vileness Fats, performed "Kick a Cat," a selection featured on the original Santa Dog. The camera operator never showed up, but a security guard got part of the show on videotape, and perhaps someday it will be unveiled to the rest of us. By 1976 The Residents were getting the international recognition that their four biggest fans had been confidently predicting for years. So after an invited visit, they gave into these chums from the homeland who had clamored to mold them from the beginning - Jay Clem, Homer Flynn, Hardy Fox, and John Kennedy. These four decided to call themselves The Cryptic Corporation, and their goal was to support and ultimately thrive on the music of The Residents after a moderate investment to get the business

flowing. The Cryptics are uneasy about divulging facts about themselves-what The Residents have is apparently contagious-but they admit ominously to funding The Residents' projects and themselves over the years with shrewd real estate deals and they will say no more.



## MEET THE RESIDENTS

**5/5**

The Residents' early work is perhaps their most bizarre and challenging. Mixing elements of Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart, and Sun Ra with their twisted sense of song structure, they craft an odd and often indescribable musical collage unmatched by anything that came before them.



## DUCK STAB

**4/5**

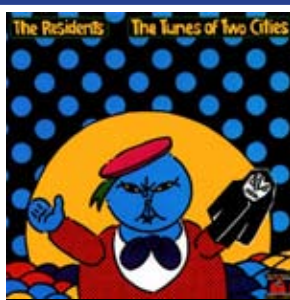
The songs are fairly linear and the lyrics are even sung clearly, but don't take this to mean that they've become radio friendly. These catchy little numbers are 14 nightmarish excursions into the demented nursery of the Residents, and after you've weathered one sitting they'll continue to poke at your brain for days.



## THE TUNES OF TWO CITIES

**3/5**

The songs alternate between the cultures, from the surrealist big band of the more highly developed people to the very primitive percussive music of the less developed culture. The juxtaposition is interesting, and the instrumental music is at times highly original and entertaining.



## DEMONS DANCE ALONE

**4/5**

Demons Dance Alone, although it doesn't refer specifically to any of the events, is a very definite response to helpless anguish. The story-telling singers, with their peculiar, American, off-key twangs, are both appropriate and dissonant. In this way, the voice is akin to Tom Waits or Leonard Cohen.

