

# EXISTERS

*The Existers were a 1978 power pop new wave punk group from Toronto. The band grew out of an earlier group known as the Toyz. George Higton from the Existers also ran Shades, one of the first Toronto punk fanzines, so there is a lot of history behind this band. They came in to Equalizing-X-Distort in May of last year to tell their stories of the old scene.*

*This interview was conducted by Greg Dick.*

**MRR:** Now Barrie, you were a member of the Toyz, and the other original member Baby Oil, who was also in the Existers, is sadly no longer with us. So we will have to rely on you for most of the Toyz information. How did the Toyz come about?

Barrie: We were just fans like everybody else. Mike Dent, the drummer for the Dents, was at the same high school as us, and he started telling us about punk rock. He said you got to come and check this thing out. So we went down and saw the Diodes play, and that sort of blew my lid. And then I went to see the Viletones, and I thought "Okay I don't know what this is." I had been a prog rock/glam guy, and this music was something that I was looking for. Something fresh. Everything was so horrible at the time. So we just started hanging out. I decided to see if I could write some songs; that was the Toyz. I had written a couple of songs, and they sounded punky to me.

**MRR:** Did the Toyz do any cover songs?

Barrie: "My Boyfriend's Back". Well, Baby Oil swung every which way, and so there's going to be trouble. His boyfriend's going to beat the hell out of you if you mess around.

**MRR:** Who was in the Toyz?

Barrie: There was Steven "Baby Oil" Hall, who was the lead singer, and then there was Ricky Rancid. That was what we called our drummer Ricky Mertz, he is gone parts unknown, and Peter Pubic was our fifteen-year-old bass player. I thought he was about seventeen or eighteen. He had this little moustache, and this sort of power.

George:  
Y e a h ,  
but nobody  
pushed those  
kids around.

Barrie: No they didn't, but he was playing at David's and Sandy was always hitting on him, until he found out he was fifteen and in his club and then he blew his mind. So we end up replacing him with Mark Weber, who we called Mark Machine and he was the older brother of Even Weber, who was the lead singer of the Dents, so it's all incestuous.

**MRR:** I didn't realize there was such a strong Dents connection. Where was the first glg for the Toyz?

Barrie: It was at David's. We did three nights with the Curse. That was a disaster the first night, and sort of slowly came around, but it was mostly just booze and stupidity.

**MRR:** Tell me about the Curse. What were they like?

Barrie: We were like groupies for the Curse before we actually had our band. We had a shirt all signed by Dr. Bourque and Mickey Skin. They were tough and brave. They were just crazy wild girls. One time when they were playing at the Shock Theatre, opening up for Sylvain Sylvain, I don't know who did the booking, but there was this Who cover band, and we started booing them. The Curse got up and were crawling up on the stage, and these guys just packed



Below: the Toyz





it in. They were afraid that Mickey Skin was going to rip their heads off.

**MRR: You guys played the Shock Theatre with the Ugly. What do you remember of those guys?**

Barrie: The Ugly are my favorite out of all the punk bands.

George: That was the show where I first saw the Toyz.

Barrie: Well that's right. We were asked to do this fundraiser for *Shades Magazine* and it was utter chaos. Baby Oil was really on his game and he had cat food that he shoved down his pants, so he was pulling that out and throwing chunks of it at people. And we had taken a fire extinguisher; we thought this would be really cool, like a dry ice mist or something. I don't know what the hell we thought. Anyway, he pulled it out at the end, and we cleared about 200 to 300 people right out of the Shock Theatre and onto College Street, I remember members of the Diodes just running and coughing.

**MRR: I heard he was also rolling around in broken glass at that gig that preceded the fire extinguisher.**

Barrie: Someone ran up in front of him and started smashing bottles on the floor, so he just dove off the stage and just started doing the worm.

**MRR: Were you allowed to play there again after that?**

Barrie: They sort of hinted that we should help clean up, but we were in such bad shape that it didn't happen. Baby Oil and Mark the bass player went to York University to book us a gig and when they were there the guy who loaded alcohol into the bar showed up, so they stole and drank a forty ounce of vodka but they mixed it with pills called Artane, which are totally insane. They were for Parkinson's disease. You would be sitting there with four of your best friends and then they would disappear. But you may have had a three-hour tea party. You just don't know.

Mark was found at a self-serve gas station trying to fill up cars. He thought he was at work. And Baby Oil disappeared. We had a couple of gigs booked and we didn't know where he was. We had to go and line up in a field and go across looking for a body. The police had picked him up naked, he was lying in a pond up by York University rolling around. They took him to two hospitals. Both times he was so crazy; "We have to take you to Whitby," and in those days they could just give you a shot and sign you in for

thirty days, and you had no rights, so that's what happened. I got this call a few days later, "I'm in Whitby, man." He woke up in a room with a dome at the door, and he went up to the door and he was like "I'm okay. I just overdosed." And all the guys who were outside were like, "Yeah, I'm okay." And they all start dancing around him, like one of your worst nightmares.

**MRR: At Club David's Baby Oil was known to pull link sausage from his fly, and I don't know what he was doing with pork and beans...**

Barrie: What was really gross about the whole thing was that he never wore underwear and he would take the link sausage and put them in. The whole idea was he was going to open his fly and pull them out like a cartoon. But of course it's all jammed in his jeans with his ten-inch



schlong and it just turned into mush. So he would reach in his pants and just start pulling out clumps of sausage. It was quite hilarious.

**MRR: Describe Club David's for us.**

Barrie: Club David's was a really cool mixture. It was a gay disco, and I don't think it was doing that well, so they started to allow punk there around September of '77. After twelve o'clock it would go back to being a disco. There was a restaurant attached to it called the Garage for little nineteen year old guys from the 'burbs or whatever. There were transvestites, transsexuals, hookers, pimps, and all kinds of neat street life, and they would all come out and be part of David's. But I used to just hang out with the deejay there. We would put two records on at a time because you were trying to kill disco as much as you could. You would

play two records at the same time and they wouldn't know.

Dennis: Where was David's?

Barrie: On Phibes Street. You know where the Gas Works was? About a block north and then you had to sneak and tuck in. Do you remember Bellows? We practiced there. There used to be a big disco called Bellows and then they gutted it and our manager got us in there and then the City of Toronto chucked us out.

Dennis: We were there for a while. I remember hiding our equipment amongst construction debris so it wouldn't get stolen.

George: Our shows were our practices.

**MRR: What was the last show that the Toyz played?**

Barrie: The last show that the Toyz played was without Baby Oil, at the Shock Theatre again ...

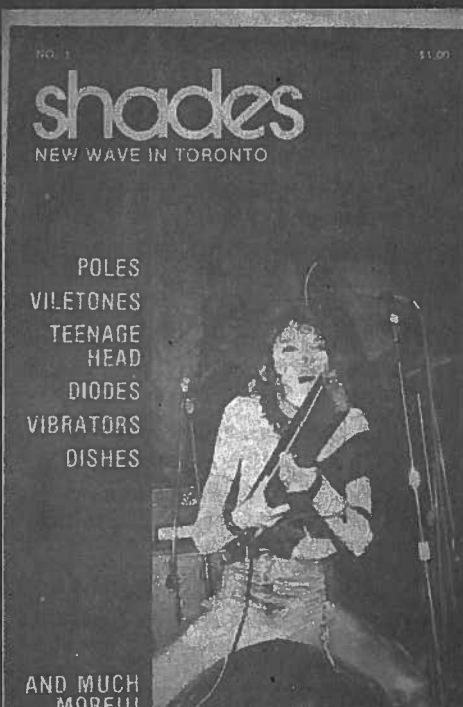
**MRR: So they let you back in.**

Barrie: Yeah they let us back in and they were cool. They thought it was a great show. George: The Shock was run by fans.

**MRR: You played with the Ugly there, and I think you played with the Ugly at David's didn't you? You were telling me that one time the police came in looking for somebody from the Ugly.**

Barrie: They took the PA system. They came in like totally cool. They knew the boys. It was like "Oh hi Mike. How are ya doin'?" They just grabbed all the stuff and out the door. "Oh well. I guess that's all for tonight." The next day Johnny Garbagecan had another PA set up.

**MRR: And Johnny Garbagecan was the manager for the Ugly? And he always had a briefcase with him.**



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NEW WAVE IN TORONTO

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VILETONES  
TEENAGE  
HEAD  
DIODES  
VIBRATORS  
DISHES

AND MUCH  
MORE!!!

George: Johnny also published the first punk fanzine.

Barrie: *T.O. Punk*.

**MRR: What came first the *Crash 'n Burn Newsletter* or the *T.O. Punk*?**

George: Probably *Crash 'n Burn Newsletter*, but I'm guessing.

**MRR: Getting to zines, George you were involved with *Shades* magazine. What was your role in the zine?**

George: Well I wanted to do something with more legs under it then a fanzine. At the time I thought Toronto needed a tabloid from the ground up. It's difficult to conceive at this point that Toronto had no underground press, unless it was photocopied and distributed as handouts. I was inspired a bit by *New York Rocker*. There was nothing here from the street level. A lot of the stuff was kind of verging on academic, with a lot of theorizing. There was some Marxist stuff, some specific art publications, but nothing from the street that was looking at what was happening around the corner. What was happening down at the Shock Theatre.

It's strange the way the public record works. I never understood it. Partly I wanted to get into putting out a magazine because I understood that it was really easy to be a public record. It is really easy to be the media as many generations have discovered since. And when you are the media you can write the record, and that is a power that I think everybody should access.

Barrie: But he couldn't write much about us because people would whine so we had *Exister Tunes*.

George: Not that there were any petty personal politics going on in the Toronto

punk scene in the '70s.

**MRR: There was a promoter that came in from New York City, called Louie Louie. Did he ever write for *Shades*?**

George: No... he rings a bell but can't place the contact.

**MRR: He brought in a band called the New York Niggers. He did the Dead Boys at the Rock Palace.**



George: If he did the Dead Boys I probably met him because we hung out with the Dead Boys as much as we could, they were nice guys, a lot of fun and really talented.

Barrie: Jimmy Zero—my whole guitar style is based on his rhythm guitar playing, not Cheetah Chrome. I could never be a wailing lead guitar guy, just that thick rhythm "Sonic Reducer" kind of sound. People say, "Ooh it's like you were from the Cars." No, it was the Dead Boys for god sakes.

**MRR: Did you get any international feedback?**

George: Well, we had international writers. In fact one of those writers was Olivier Cossard.

Barrie: He was our second bass player. Our first bass player was Paul who exploded or something and then we had Olivier.

George: Olivier was a genuine Paris intellectual, as he proclaimed himself, and he was right. He did some shows with us and then bowed out. The thing is he is almost like an anthropologist I think. He dropped in on Toronto in the late '70s to see how this species lived.

Barrie: And then the government caught wind and he got deported.

George: And not a moment too soon. He shaved his beard for us.

Barrie: Well yeah. That had to go.

**MRR: Was *Shades* available outside**

**Toronto?**

George: Yes. In fact an early coup for us was to land national distribution across Canada. I got letters from kids in the prairies, from Banff and places. I felt a little sad sometimes because I felt like I was selling them a myth because I was making this stuff up. I was rhapsodizing it.

**MRR: Don't tell us that now after all these years.**

George: If you are going to have a scene you are going to need media to create buzz around a scene. It's their job to make a story interesting. So I tried to make it interesting. And I would get letters from kids in the prairies. It was so touching, 'I want to come to Toronto to start a band. Thank you so much for opening this world to me.' If that's a positive then I'll accept it. I was glad about that. But on the other hand I felt a little dubious about it.

**MRR: At the time I think Toronto was for at least a year or two the only place where you could get exposure to this kind of music.**

George: Well there was a scene in Vancouver. DOA and...

**MRR: That happened a little later I think.**

George: I don't know. And there was stuff going on in St. John's and Halifax. There was stuff going on all over the place.

Barrie: Vancouver had some early bands because they came to Toronto.

**MRR: Well there was the Skulls.**

Barrie: The Skulls came with Joey Shithead, and in fact they opened for themselves and switched instruments and called themselves Ernie And The Bloated Cows. Now there is a fact you probably don't know.

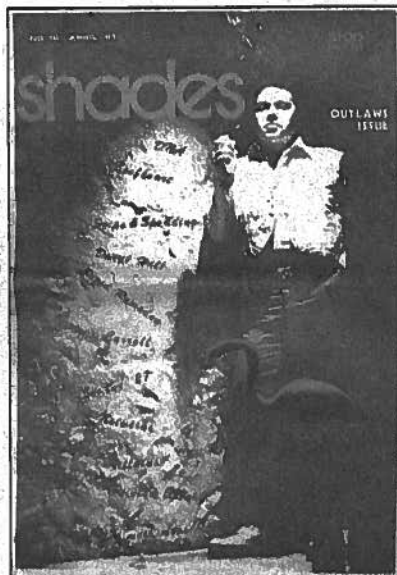
**MRR: So George, when you were at the Shock and you saw the Toyz playing, I guess that was the first time you got to meet Barrie ...**

George: Yeah. At the time what struck me about the Toyz was that they had more depth then the ordinary run of the mill punk band. There were a lot of them around with this monolithic sound. Kind of thin, with a top end. You guys thought about bottom and it seemed like you thought about arrangement. You had real guts. It was real depth and force. I said "I want to be in something like that."

Barrie: I said, well there is a problem here; the lead singer's in the halfway house.

George: Perfect. I'll take over. We had such brass.

Barrie: We started that way because Dennis was going to start a band with Baby Oil. It was going to be just drums and guitar. When he was in Whitby he learned how to play guitar sort of.







George: He would have made a million dollars.

Dennis: It wouldn't have lasted.

Barrie: He was just going to use you and him, and instead I stole you both.

**MRR: How was getting Baby Oil to move over to bass from being a front man? Was he okay with that?**

Barrie: Well, yeah. He sort of was already onto a new life. He was washing dishes at a disco or something.

George: He shed skins every couple of weeks.

**MRR: Sounds like it.**

Barrie: Very Lou Reed-ish. That was his hero. I was there one night when him and his wife Terry sat there and played a Beatles song, and he did the picking part you know the lead line and I thought, if you could do that you can play bass. Olivier is getting shipped off to Paris in two weeks, so why don't you come practice. He went out and bought himself a precision bass and within a week he was our bass player.

**MRR: And you knew Baby Oil from the glam rock scene.**

Barrie: I knew Baby Oil from when I was eleven or twelve.

**MRR: Tell me about meeting Steve Leckie of the Viletones during those glam rock years.**

Barrie: We both met him because we used to hang out with a big gang called the Larry's. Do you remember these guys? There were about twenty of them all called Larry.

Dennis: Yep. Guys brave enough to wear glitter and platform shoes.

Barrie: Yeah. You were a lead singer in a glitter band.

Dennis: Strange characters would show up, in big platform shoes. About six inches, totally glammed out, it turned out to be Nazi Dog. But back then he was Ariel. The first thing he did was bum a beer off me.

Barrie: Didn't he have an English accent?

Dennis: We all did because it was cool to be like Bowie.

**MRR: I always remember back in '77 in Toronto that there seemed to be this accent that came with the punk scene that was half New York and half English, but I had never heard that explanation before.**

George: Exactly. We are half way between New York and London, but that's our strength, we have one foot in London and one in North America. It causes groin strain, but it's a real boost.

Barrie: It was changing daily. It was like rules were coming out. It was like someone would make a decree "Punks have no money, therefore they don't do drugs." Really? Have a look around. These decrees would come around. Or a band would get labeled a new wave band and it would be like, "Oh no, now we have that title."

George: And give the punks credit for immediately putting down an attempted takeover by right wing skinheads. Give them credit for that. Within weeks that insurrection was put down and they were put in their place.

**MRR: I never even heard of skinheads until the early '80s. I didn't really see that stuff in the punk scene. Even as a bass player Baby Oil's stage presence garnered him a lot of attention on and off the stage.**

George: Yeah, when he was on bass he planted a flagpole in his ass. He claimed that space.

Dennis: He was a strange looking fellow, and large.

Barrie: But you know he was a softy, he just looked like hell. He would show up at my house dressed like Judy Garland. He would have a long white shirt on with nail polish and his eyes and hair done like Judy Garland. I opened the door and then I closed the door.

**MRR: He got you guys in the promoters, the Garys' bad books. How did this come about?**

Barrie: We did a gig at the Horseshoe and they were mad because two microphones had gone missing. We were reaming everybody out, we blamed the other band; I think it was the Sophisticatos or Children Of Divorce... Baby Oil later produced two microphones that he grabbed. We didn't get to do the Last Pogo. We figured it was the mics.

George: We were barred from doing the Last Pogo; that was the official record.

**MRR: But you guys**

**got a lot of great support gigs at the Horseshoe, like the Troggs and the Heartbreakers.**

George: Johnny Thunders.

Barrie: Yeah. Now he was a disappointment unfortunately. All he was trying to do was bum drugs and try to steal my amp.

Dennis: They absolutely would not take the stage until they got their proper medication.

Barrie: When they got on it took them forty-five minutes to tune. When they finally played it was amazing.

**Baby Oil was finally admitted to a psychiatric hospital.**

Barrie: Well that was in the Toyz. Yeah.

**That didn't happen after you were the Existers?**

Barrie: No. He had many other adventures. In the Existers he left when there was too much amphetamines and speed. He quit, sold his bass. With the \$1,200 he got he bought \$300 worth of liquid speed. He hit an artery instead of a vein and had gang green. They thought they had to cut off about half of his arm, but it turned out that they cut off half a finger. That was in that era. Dennis moved over to bass after that.

**MRR: Was he a changed man after he got out of the hospital?**

Barrie: Naw. He was the same guy.

Dennis: Finally the needle stopped spinning and he was gone.

**MRR: You guys played with the Poles at a place called the Dream Factory. Where was the Dream Factory?**

George: It's in the old Goderman Woertz Building.

Barrie: It's the original Toronto jail before the Don Jail.

George: A catacomb. A rabbit hole.

Barrie: We saw these rooms that maybe if you were 5' 8" you might be able to stand in them.





Dennis: People were shorter then.

Barrie: It's turned into condos now.

**MRR: You guys describe the inspiration for your songs as an optimistic celebration of street level experiences. That sounds...**

George: We got kick started in that whole punk scene. We survived three years. Longer than the normal life span by far, and out of that came a lot of good songs. A lot of it came from the tension in the band. But it was a really great creative kind of moment.

**MRR: The personalities of the Existors are quite different from each other. What were the pros and cons of this?**

George: Well we all have the same cultural references. We weren't from different planets. We were from the same city in fact.

Barrie: Basically George and I drive each other crazy. That's the main thing.

George: But I worked some good songs out of you.

Barrie: "You could do better than that. You're lazy." You said that about "Future Shock." There was good crazy tension and it was an on-going party. We just played constantly.

George: We worked all the time. We thought that's what you had to do when you are in a band. You play shows right?

**MRR: Well speaking of working, tell me about playing the Turning Point thirty nights in a row. You guys should have got an award for that.**

Barrie: I have pictures of us the day after, just lying in this grass. We opened up because we didn't have a rehearsal hall, so if there was nobody there we were the headliners. We played with the Demics, we played with Sophisticatos, probably the Mods, Swollen Members. We would just leave our equipment there. We didn't miss one day for thirty days.

Dennis: I remember playing to nobody.

Barrie: We swore we would never go back.

Dennis: The owner lady, I forget her name, was passed out on the counter.

Barrie: Mrs. Joe. One night Mrs. Joe passed out on a table and she puked all over the whole table. She was lying in her puke. There was one person in the audience. It was a Sunday night and in comes a fraternity. It was some University of Toronto fraternity and all hell breaks loose. Guys with stolen toilet seats around their heads screaming and yelling. The only woman there is Steve's wife Terry, who is grabbed, and every guy wants to dance with her, with a toilet seat or not. Mrs. Joe looks up from her puke and the place is packed and her head goes back down on the table. After one set they all yell, "You suck." Then they all run out the door. She looks up again and the room is empty.

**MRR: Tell me about the Mani-festival at Convocation Hall?**

George: The Mani-festival was so hastily organized I never really understood what the deal was with it, but somebody said "Do you want to come and play?" It was a three day event with a lot of New York artists. Like really diverse stuff; Fred Frith. Henry Cow. Leather Gong. Amazing stuff but there was no promotion. They just sort of laid an egg. People came and went all weekend. There would be people coming in the afternoon and the evening and leaving and coming back.

Barrie: There was a Grateful Dead concert the first day, they had velvet bell bottoms and I remember seeing Michael Jordana of the Poles, and Douglas walk in looking like black flies. They walk in this room and are surrounded by colorful hippies dancing. And then the next day it was like there were so many bands they filled the bottom part of Convocation Hall. We all just sort of played to each other.

Dennis: Yeah. No audience, just bands.

**MRR: You guys were a sharply dressed band. Your image was obviously important. It seemed like you put some thought into it for sure especially when you guys got all the suits and everything. And George had one of the coolest haircuts I ever saw.**

George: Goodwill was always there. I would stumble into there and get a handful of skinny ties.

Dennis: I think the ties came from Aaron's dad.

Barrie: Someone's dad died. That's how we got all the suits. And I think my mom was working for a lawyer or something and I think the guy croaked. We ended up with a bunch of suits.

George: Surplus stores were good.

Barrie: Baby Oil showed up with a bunch of suits. I'm not sure where they came from. I got one that said "Barrie Q Modern". It was a big white cardboard thing.

**MRR: Paul McGrath of the Globe and Mail wrote a piece to describe a show at the Edge, which the Viletones Steve Leckie seemed disturbed at what he described**

**as your new wave leanings. What do you guys think was the difference with punk and new wave back then?**

George: Nobody knows where the dividing line entered between punk and new wave, but something happened. Punk became very quickly recognizable by its marks. Okay we got that figured out. What's next? Well what was next was new wave. Sharper suits in the case of the Jam, I saw Paul Weller, one of the great figures of modern music on TV at the time around '78 or '79 on the *Tom Snyder Show* and Snyder asked him 'Well Mr. Weller what's this new wave all about?' and Weller said "Well it's about unity innit?" Unity of what I don't know.

Barrie: It was almost like a date thing. If you weren't in by August 1st, 1977 you were new wave. The Toyz were called new wave. The Toyz were a raucous rock band, but we were like August the 3rd so we missed out on the cut. I just think that what happened was people just started to legitimize it. People learned a third and a fourth chord.

**MRR: I thought it almost came up from a record company executive, the word new wave, to try and make punk marketable.**

George: No way. When they went shopping for that label it was already out there in the streets for them, packaged and ready to go.

Barrie: But they were terrified of punk. They didn't know what to do with it. And if you listen to a lot of radio in the summer of '77 it was some of the worst music that has ever been created. *Saturday Night Fever* came out in '77, and we all thought disco was dead and punk was rocking.

**MRR: Tell me about the "Telex Love" 7" single. Where was it recorded?**

Barrie: We recorded in the Gattineau Hills with Stewart Smith who was really the big daddy of the Ottawa scene, they had an 8-track studio, and we traded a gig at the Rotters Club in Ottawa. It was a really cool club. They had phenomenal sound. So we would play there and then we would stay at their house and record.

**MRR: Who produced the record?**

Barrie: There was Stewart and the guy who played the sax, Carl.

**MRR: That is not Chip playing that then?**

Barrie: No that was a guy named Carl. We lost our minds. We were so raw and we went in there, and they had a mini moog with a weird sound on it, "Yeah, great." So we put that in there and we added sax. We just got caught up in the whole studio frenzy.

**MRR: How did you guys finance pressing the single? Because back then it was expensive putting out a record.**

Dennis: I think we were the tax write-off band.

Barrie: We got grabbed up by Eddie and Drago, we were like the naughty kids. They put it out. They pressed a thousand. They forgot to put the name Existors on it so we

had to hand stamp every one of them.

**MRR: How was the record received?**

Barrie: I was surprised. We got played on Q107. We play-listed. We got play-listed on 102. That was kind of neat. I remember hearing "Radar Love" and then "Telex Love" back to back and my father being there and finally going "Oh my son the guitar player. He's a bum. Punk rocker."

**MRR: Was it available outside of Toronto or Canada?**

Barrie: It got shipped to some oddball places. San Francisco.

Dennis: We got no support whatsoever. And then the band was breaking up.

Barrie: When Baby-Oil left it wasn't the same band so we all lost spirit. We had a manager at the time Adam Break, and he disappeared and started working with the Viletones.

**MRR: Were you guys approached by any major labels?**

Barrie: No.

Dennis: We could see them running away.

**MRR: Is there enough Existens material recorded now from back then to put a release out in the future?**

Barrie: There was a guy that recorded a set at the Beverley.

**MRR: So live recordings.**

Barrie: It was really well done. There was also some studio stuff that we did near the end that has just gone by the wayside. When Rush were recording with Max Webster we were getting free studio time, coming in and setting our equipment up in between these monstrous drum kits. We did some songs there that were pretty good but...

**MRR: You guys went to great lengths to avoid being categorized by the media.**

Dennis: I know they wanted to put a sticker on our 45. A new wave sticker. We refused.

Barrie: People just didn't know what to do with us.

Dennis: We didn't want to be labeled.

**MRR: And George did the cover artwork for the 7".**

George: No, I screwed up the artwork. There was an artist; I think he was a French kid. We often had artists and writers just drop in at *Shades* and visit. He showed us his drawings. I appropriated one. His name is on the cover.

Dennis: Electric O Madness.

George: I thought this would make a nice cover for the Existens record. I went and screwed it up. I put the Existens logo on the top. I should have just let the picture speak for itself.

**MRR: In the last year and a half, there seems to have been a lot of interest in the first generation Toronto punk scene. Why**

**do you think this is all of a sudden?**

George: I think back to when I was a kid and I was disdainful of pop culture, as we all should be, at least at a certain level, and I would go up to Sam's and comb the third floor through their jazz and blues records. I would see records by Mississippi John Hurt and Son House and all these old guys, Muddy Waters, Magic Sam. I thought, they are old, they must be good; this must be authentic. I think that's what is happening.

Barrie: But it was a huge shift in music. It was like rock 'n' roll had just come to a complete thud. Emerson Lake And Palmer were travelling with an orchestra.

George: And the fans revived it. They revived rock 'n' roll.

Barrie: The fans put the bands together. Compared to the early '80s scene out west, where there was a much more sameness in sound, every Toronto band was completely different. But it was just that nobody seemed to have a clue. They didn't care if they could play or not, or how much of a virtuoso they were. They were just making stuff up and laying it down.

**MRR: Do you think the Toronto scene got the recognition it deserved at the time?**

Barrie: I think it is getting it now. I don't think it did at all back then.

Dennis: We were just a wart on the Toronto scene.

George: The music scene in Toronto changed inexorably after '77. There was no going back. Look, the rules had changed, perspectives have changed, technology has changed, everything has changed. From now on it is going to be different and you are going to use these elements, which we have provided for you, so good luck to you. Maybe in a couple of years you will have a music industry in this country. And we were right.

**MRR: Scott, tell me about the last Existens gig?**

Scott: How long do I have? We played in Cobacank. Some foolish agent booked us in Cobacank, Ontario at the corner of Highway 48 and 35 at the Paddy House. We somehow got up there. George forgot his amp.

George: I pawned my guitar because I needed some money to live on.

Scott: We had a sound crew that came with us, and I remember it just didn't feel right. There were farmers playing

billiards in the back. We did our sound check and the lady behind the bar that ran the place said "I hope that's not what you're going to play all weekend. Do you guys know any Elvis?" and we all looked at each other like "Oh my God."

Dennis: Sure lady, we know lots of Elvis.

Scott: We play the first night and I don't remember how many nights we actually did.

Barrie: But we had signed a contract that would give us four sets of forty or fifty minutes each. We did our first set of thirty-five minutes or whatever it is, and the guy finds us and goes, "Now you must do an extra twenty five minutes." We had to repeat every single song.

Scott: I remember after our first set we had little hotel rooms they gave us to sit in in-between sets, and we went upstairs and someone said you better come down there's someone stealing your equipment and there was a band called the Lindsay Huns that were from Lindsay, Ontario, and these guys had come in to watch us. In between our sets they took all our mics so we couldn't play. The sound guys that we hired for the weekend called the cops. That was the last Existens weekend.

Barrie: No. Then we drove home and ran out of gas. I tried to cut off a hose from an air pump and suck gas out into my mouth, get a siphon going and fill up. We couldn't do it. We fell asleep in the car. We all had horrible breath. It doesn't taste good and you wake up in the morning and you have pimples all over your face from the gasoline. Oh that was enough.

