

On March 9 of this year Zen Guerrilla entertained the crowd at the Holy Cow. This night was eventful for several reasons. The infamous Mel Parkinson (she's the one who made fun of the patrons of My Wife's Place and had to get out of town to avoid a lynching...remember? It was all in the Private Eye's "Best and Worst issue.") was leaving for Las Vegas and she took her last Salt Lake City photos. One of those photos showed Chopper, singer for the Decomposers, in his famous "panty" pose. After the Decomposers and Chopper created the first event of early spring the second event, an event ranking with Chopper singing in dirty panties occurred. Zen Guerrilla took the stage for the first time ever in Salt Lake City. Those trained by Salt Lake City radio, the daily newspapers, SLCW and grid Magazine are probably unaware of how big the "event" was. Over at SLCW, previously known as the Private Eye, an intern argued that Zen Guerrilla didn't play the blues. As I recall this individual, a supposed expert on the blues whose name has been erased from my mind, classified the band as "noise." As I remember he predicted that a large "mosh" pit would appear on the Holy Cow dance floor. He was partly right and as you, the loyal SLUG reader, will soon discover, Zen Guerrilla have some experience as a "noise" band. But, as the Holy Cow patrons present for the show will recall, there wasn't a "mosh" pit and Zen Guerrilla proved that they could play the blues.

Jennifer Fisher, one of my favorite publicists, who is lucky enough to receive a paycheck signed by Jello Biafra, the Alternative Tentacles fearless leader, set me up with Marcus, Zen Guerrilla's lead singer for a phone conversation. Marcus remembered the Holy Cow appearance and he said, "I had a good time there. It exceeded my expectations." Considering the venue, the audience was appreciative. My first question was "How tall are you?" This question seemed to surprise Marcus and he answered in two words, "Six seven." I could almost feel that he wanted to ask, "Why?" Well to me a person that tall is big, very big. Especially when this large person is stalking about a stage blowing a harmonica, beating on a guitar and howling into a microphone run through some sort of distortion unit. Yes, it was quite a show wasn't it? So Marcus is six feet seven inches tall. I didn't ask him his weight. Jennifer told me that Marcus has worked as a chef in the past and that he is quite a cook. All that cooking hasn't turned to body fat and this man is someone not to be messed with. But he has other talents which I'll get to later. The second question was near-

ly as obvious as the

Butthole Surfer's Gibby Haynes and his vocal effects, but Marcus relies more on distortion and his equipment isn't hi-tech like Haynes. Actually his (Marcus) set-up is more impressive. "It's a Bell and Howell movie projector speaker." The microphone is run through an effects pedal Marcus designed and then to the Bell and Howell cabinet. "It goes through the pedal, then it goes to the B&H, I basically like...when they first designed movie projectors in the '50s, they used to put in a small tube amp with the projector and you'd run a

first. Marcus places an obviously vintage piece of equipment on top of an amplifier and connects various chords to it. The most obvious comparison is the

chord from the tube amp to an external speaker. What I did was drop out the tube amp from the projector and drop it into the speaker and created a loop through the amp to an effects pedal that I made and that's it. It give's it a bit more of a gritty, distorted sound." Fuck yeah. You have to see and hear it to believe it. Bow down to guys who use vintage equipment and create their own designs.

Marcus is not content to simply use this device for vocals. As I said he blows a

harp through the unit and he has a guitar connected as well. When I commented that he "banged on the guitar," he replied, "That's kind of playing isn't it?" I'll say. Imagine if you will a man six feet seven inches tall beating on a guitar, singing and blowing a harmonica all of which are run through a self-created effects peddle which is connected to an antique movie projector amplifier and speaker. You missed Zen Guerrilla the last time? Don't miss them again.

I'm not done yet. Zen Guerrilla both live and on their records do a bit of gospel. On the Invisible "Liftee" Pad/Gap-Tooth Clown CD, an

Alternative Tentacles reissue of two previously released Zen Guerrilla EPs, there is a song titled "Wee Wee Hours"

and a song titled "Gospel Tent." So, fool that I am I asked Marcus what his religious background was. Marcus: "None." SLUG: "Where does the gospel come from?" Marcus: "Do you think gospel has a lot to do with religion?" SLUG: "Not necessarily." Marcus: "Well, my father's black. So I grew up listening to gospel music and going to Baptist churches, but I'm officially no religion. My mother's British so I'm sort of a mutt. I haven't taken up any kind of religion. The closest religion I've got is what I'm doing now with the music. But, yeah, I was definitely influenced by gospel. My aunts and my uncles and my father's side of the family were very active in the Baptist church so I grew up with those sounds and that experience and spiritual records. I was influenced by all that music, more so the music and the feeling than anything to do with the religion." Please refer back to the beginning of this article and the Private Eye intern who couldn't hear the blues in Zen Guerrilla's music. Marcus creates the artwork for Zen Guerrilla's CD and record covers. So far we've learned that he is a chef, an electronics designer, a musician and now... "I went to the University of Delaware for visual communications and graphic design."

SLUG: "Did you graduate?" Marcus: "Yeah, I have a degree. I've been doing free-lance graphic design for about eight years now. I've done everything from screen printing to offset printing." SLUG: "Are you still doing it? What kind of stuff do you work on?" Marcus: "I do posters. I just had a show, it was September of last year at the Smithsonian, it was a retrospective of graphic design for the past five years. I do rock posters, the whole nine yards."

Zen Guerrilla began in 1991. I was curious about the early days of the band and how the music developed and grew from then to now. Marcus: "We were definitely a lot more rootsy when we started and we sort of went way out into left field...one of the moons of Uranus. We were definitely out there rockin'." SLUG: "Is any of that music recorded?" Marcus: "Oh yeah, our first album on CD is all one track, it's 40 minutes. We have a bunch of singles from that time. There used to be another guy in our band. His name was Daniel. He played just noise guitar, just noise, it was more of a noise thing. Embracing noise and simple rhythms." SLUG: "Where can I get copies of that music?" Marcus: "Actually a lot of it's out of print, actually it's all out of print. It's out there, we don't have any copies of it, people that have it have it. We're going to try to re-release it all, put it all together on one thing." The band does have a few of their early singles and copies of the two EPs collected on the Alternative Tentacles album available for sale at their shows.

Now I know that there are people in Salt Lake City who listen to bands such as the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, the Chrome Cranks, the Oblivians, Teen Generate, Fireworks, Cash Money and the like. There are also people in Salt Lake City who have discovered the fucked-up mother fucking blues Matthew Johnson has been releasing on his Fat Possum label - Twenty Miles, T-Model Ford and the Neckbones for example. If you combine Fat Possum, Crypt, Estrus, Sympathy For The Record Industry, SST, Alternative Tentacles and Dionysius altogether in one band you will find Zen Guerrilla. Blues, soul, gospel and a whole heaping mess of noise that kicks and scratches big beats, primitive reproductive rhythms, spasms and volcanic eruptions from any speaker cabinets encountered. Marcus, Rich (guitar), Carl (bass) and Andy (drums) will be at the Hula Hut on September 21 to enlighten all ages on the true nature of rock 'n' roll. The display will most likely begin around 8:00 p.m. In case this "magazine" finds its way to Ogden Zen Guerrilla will visit the O Town Tavern in your "fine" town on September 20.

—An Older Gentleman