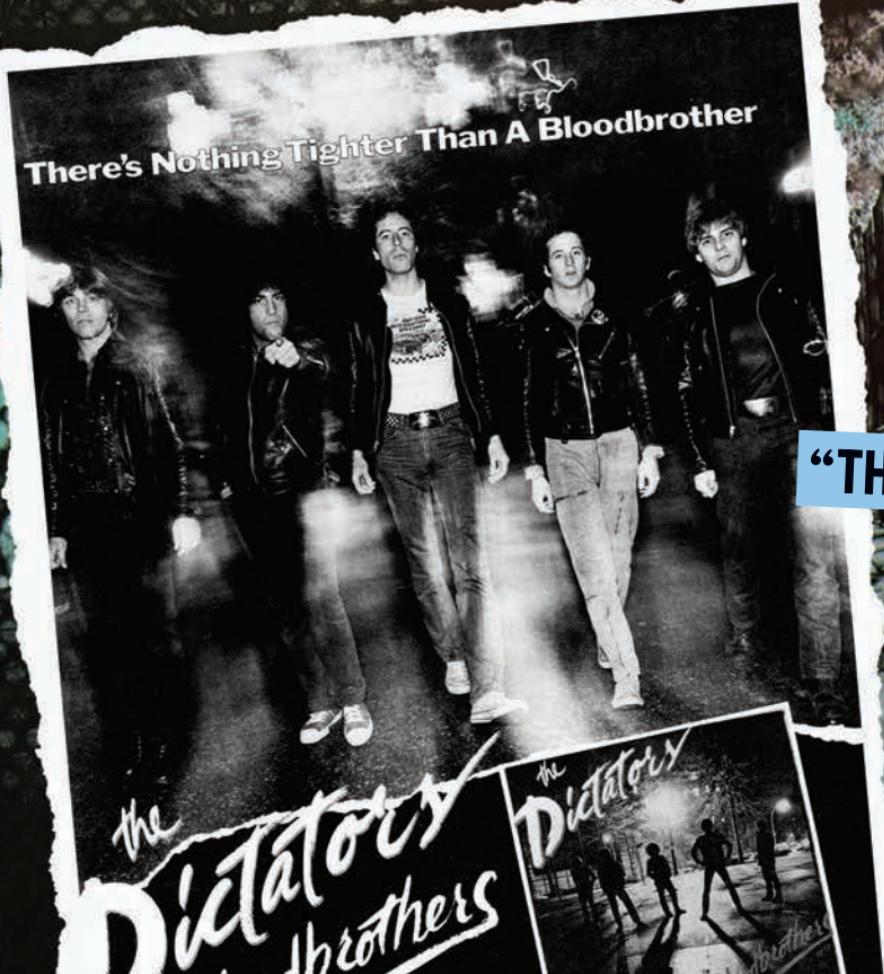


THE **DICTATORS**

FASTER... LOUDER:
THE DICTATORS' BEST 1975-2001





“THERE’S NOTHING TIGHTER THAN A BLOODBROTHER”

DICTATORS FOREVER FOREVER DICTATORS

RATHER THAN BEING THE “Last Gang in Town”, The Dictators must surely be the “Only Gang in Town”. Well, the only gang that mattered. In an on-off career that spans an astonishing 40 years, the legendary New York band has borne the weight of the “us against them” ideal to come out with heads held high and reputations intact.

They've always embraced the notion of gang solidarity. They took the title of third album, *Bloodbrothers*, from the novel by Richard Price and upped the ante by placing the letters “DFFD” underneath the title on the front cover. Apparently inspired by the ominous AFFA (Angels Forever Forever Angels) patches on Hell’ Angels jackets, they'd sought permission from the biker crew to come up with a knockoff. There will always be that special bond between the band members.

F THE PRAISE AND ACCOLADES
heaped upon them down the years could be translated into record sales then they'd be the *richest* band in the world. There are fans who believe them to be the *best* band in the world and, all their albums are significant, so words of praise flow easily:

Gregg Turner and Gary Sperrazza, *BOMP!* magazine (November 1977): "Show us a rock 'n' roll fan who doesn't like *Go Girl Crazy* and we'll show you someone who only pretends to listen to records. The Dictators were saying 'have fun' and believe us, that was a profound revelation in the Stone Age of the early 70's."



John Dougan, *All Music Guide*: "N.Y.C.'s Dictators were one of the finest and most influential proto-punk bands to walk the earth. Alternately revelling in and satirizing the wanton excesses of a rock & roll lifestyle and lowbrow culture (e.g., wrestling, TV, fast food), the Dictators played loud, fast rock & roll fuelled by a love of '60s American garage rock, British Invasion pop, and the sonic onslaught of the Who."

When the band played at Little Steven's Underground Garage Festival (14 August 2004), the E-Street guitarist and arbiter of all things cool introduced them as "the missing link between the New York Dolls and punk: one of the most important bands in the history of rock 'n' roll – The Dictators!!"

There's no doubt the 'Tators put their entire collective heart and soul into everything they did, their records just didn't sell in significant numbers in order to put them into the big league. Perhaps their blend of hard rock guitar crunch and a street-level proto-punk aesthetic was too prescient to catch on.

And while fans were lapping up KISS, Aerosmith and Boston records by the truckload, the irony is that the 'Tators' version of youth gone wild was just as overtly and playfully relevant. They were

ready to party at the drop of a hat and years before the Beastie Boys proclaimed "You've got to fight for your right to party", The Dictators embodied that very same sentiment. Perhaps the savage satire and rapier-like wit inherent in Andy Shernoff's lyrics just went over the collective heads of the general record buying public.

And make no mistake: *The Dictators Go Girl Crazy!* contains some of the funniest lyrics in all of 1970s rock, for example:



"I knocked 'em dead in Dallas but I didn't pay my dues / Yeah, I knocked 'em dead in Dallas, they didn't know we were Jews" – 'The Next Big Thing'

"My favorite part of growing up is when I'm sick and throwing up / It's the dues you've got to pay for eating burgers every day" – 'Master Race Rock'

THE NEXT BIG THING

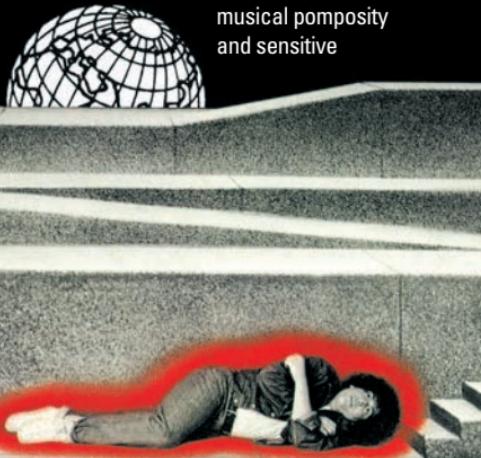
The band's story has been well chronicled, suffice to say that by the time they recorded the debut album the line-up comprised: Andy (billed as Adny on the sleeve) Shernoff (bass, lead vocals); Ross "The Boss" Friedman (FUNichello on the sleeve) (lead guitar, vocals); Scott "Top Ten" Kempner (Pacemaker guitar); Stu Boy King (drums); and the band's "Secret Weapon" installed as frontman, Handsome Dick Manitoba (born Richard Blum).

Shernoff explains the band's origins:

"For my generation it all started with The Beatles on Ed Sullivan, everybody

and I mean everybody watched their performance... I knew I wanted to play music after that. I became hooked on rock music. I initially went through an intense Beach Boys phase, followed by the Stones, Kinks and Who. Eventually I got hooked on the hard stuff; The MC5, The Stooges and Lenny Kaye's *Nuggets* compilation, all of which were direct influences on The Dictators.

"I knew we were doing something out of the ordinary but there was no way to predict the consequences. We formed in 1973, which was not a particularly fertile period for rock and roll. It was full of long-winded musical pomposity and sensitive



singer songwriters. The fun element had completely disappeared because everybody was taking themselves way too seriously. That left a huge vacuum for the high energy, rebellious rock and roll that we loved and grew up on.

"I was inspired by the lyrics of Brian Wilson and Chuck Berry and always felt they epitomized rock and roll. I wanted to capture the teenage experience as they did but from the perspective of a boy growing up in New York City. '(I Love) Cars and Girls' is my tribute to Brian Wilson. I have always felt that The Dictators' lyrical approach was our major contribution. Unfortunately satire, sarcasm and rock and roll didn't inspire the masses."

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF BLUE Öyster Cult producers Murray Krugman and Sandy Pearlman, the first album remains a master class in hard rock dynamics, sizzling guitar leads and the kind of proto-punk attitude that never goes out of style. Everything was in its place, from the tunes and the guitars to the iconic front cover image. It ranks with the early classics by the MC5, the Stooges, New York Dolls and the Flamin' Groovies as a definitive addition to the catalogue of manic rockin' out. It was



mean and lean, funny and frivolous and just downright cool.

"Murray and Sandy were the first people to support and encourage us even though there was absolutely no precedent or blueprint for what we were doing. We hooked up with them in 1973, years before CBGB's, the Ramones, or any kind of 'punk' scene existed... and except for Ross we were barely competent on our instruments. Those guys saw something in us and for that I am eternally grateful."

The album didn't sell, Epic Records dropped them and the band broke up at the end of '75. By early 1976, they were back together with Handsome Dick, Ross the Boss, Top Ten and new rhythm section of drummer Richie Teeter and bassist Mark "The Animal" Mendoza. The band started to get gigs at



Hilly Kristal's CBGBs (where Television, Ramones, Patti Smith, Blondie had been playing for years) but the scene in general remained at arm's length. Shernoff had decided to stay in the background but was persuaded to rejoin on keyboards.

For second album, *Manifest Destiny*, they adopted a look and sound more akin to the Blue Öyster Cult than their earlier proto-punk image. It was a deliberate move to court a more mainstream, melodic arena rock sound with mid-tempo pop-rock and power ballads. They'd also started touring the country, supporting the likes of KISS, Uriah Heep, ZZ Top, Starz etc so that's where they headed – "Playing simplified heavy metal for teenagers

that found nothing at all funny about songs like 'Teengenerate', as Ira Robins pointed out in *Trouser Press* (June 1978).

The standout cuts 'Science Gone Too Far!', 'Young, Fast, Scientific' and the brutal cover of Iggy & the Stooges 'Search and Destroy' (recorded live at CBGBs) were fast paced hard rockers full of major chords, big choruses and Ross the Boss's patented lead solos.

T STILL WASN'T A HUGE SUCCESS. With Shernoff back to his traditional bass role and re-energized and re-invigorated by their 1977 tour of the UK and Europe, the band hit the studio for a third album. They recorded all the basic tracks live-in-the-studio for maximum impact. *Bloodbrothers* was another powerhouse album, mixing pummelling punk-metal riffage ('Faster & Louder') with mid-tempo, anthemic hard rock ('Stay With Me', 'The Minnesota Strip') to good effect.

"Experiencing the intensity of the UK punk scene first hand was a total game changer in my eyes. Rock and roll had finally become the incredible life force I always thought it should be. When I returned from England my songwriting became more precise and focused which led to the simpler, more organic direction

that *Bloodbrothers* took. By this time we had finally developed some skills on our instruments, which made the recording process easier and quicker."

The group was on the cusp of success when they broke up at the end of 1978. Over the next few years there were a number of re-formations and tours but no new studio recordings for over 20 years. In the interim, Ross the Boss joined French rockers Shakin' Street then power metal titans Manowar; Shernoff moved into production work; Kempner formed roots-rockers the Del-Lords.

Handsome Dick, Ross the Boss, Shernoff and new drummer J.P. "Thunderbolt" Patterson indulged their metal vices for a while with Manitoba's Wild Kingdom (a Dictators reunion in everything but name) but the real reformation came with the release of the *D.F.F.D.* album. It was another fun yet hard-hitting record, full of raw, punky energy and un-PC attitude to burn. Rather than focus on their "party all day" obsessions of yesteryear, this time out Shernoff turned his lyric attention to subjects such as gentrification, alienation and miscommunication.



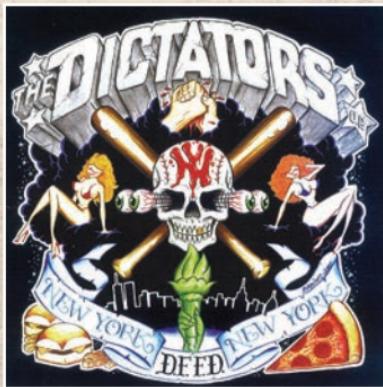


yielded what became our most popular tune 'Who Will Save Rock and Roll?'. I can't think of another band that's accomplished that on a record recorded long after their supposed heyday."

All Music Guide called the album "a non-stop barrage of spitfire precision rock" and they toured the world in support of its release. Since then there has been the occasional reformation (sometimes as Dictators NYC minus Shernoff) and the odd archival / demo release (*Every Day is Saturday*). Whatever the group's fortunes may be, for their enormous fan base around the world the spirit of The Dictators lives on – All hail The Dictators!

Ian McFarlane

"Around 1996 there was renewed interest in the band so it was either make a new record or become a nostalgia act. Everyone knows that when bands 'get back together' the reunion records invariably suck, so it was a difficult, creative challenge. We hadn't made a record together in 20 years, so the trick was to retain the outrageous attitude and youthful enthusiasm of the teenage Dictators while still maintaining our adult dignity. I also felt the legacy of the band required one more record. I think we broke the comeback jinx and I'm particularly proud that D.F.F.D.



1. THE NEXT BIG THING

2. MASTER RACE ROCK

3. CALIFORNIA SUN

(Morris Levy / Henry Glover)

4. TWO TUB MAN

5. WEEKEND

6. (I LIVE FOR) CARS AND GIRLS

Tracks 1-6 from the Epic album

The Dictators Go Girl Crazy! (KE 33348)

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7. EXPOSED

8. SCIENCE GONE TOO FAR!

9. YOUNG, FAST, SCIENTIFIC

10. SEARCH AND DESTROY

(Iggy Pop / James Williamson)

Tracks 7-10 from the Asylum album

Manifest Destiny (7E-1109)

© 1977 WEA International Inc

11. FASTER & LOUDER

(Andrew Shernoff / Joey Schaedler)

12. BABY, LET'S TWIST

13. THE MINNESOTA STRIP

14. STAY WITH ME

15. SLOW DEATH

(Roy A. Loney / Cyril Jordan)

Tracks 11-15 from the Asylum album
Bloodbrothers (6E-147) © 1978 WEA
International Inc

Tracks 7-15 licensed courtesy of Warner
Music Australia Pty Ltd

Tracks 1-15 produced by Murray
Krugman and Sandy Pearlman

16. WHO WILL SAVE ROCK AND ROLL?

17. I AM RIGHT!

18. MORONIC INFERO

19. THE SAVAGE BEAT

20. BURN, BABY, BURN!!

(Andrew Shernoff / Ross Friedman)

Tracks 16-20 from the DFFD album

D.F.F.D. (002) produced by Andy Shernoff
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