

Last Night's Show

Bill Goffrier at the Replay Lounge

By Chance Dibben, Monday, Apr. 26 2010 @ 6:45AM

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Bill Goffrier

"Y'all like the punk rock?" **Bill Goffrier** wryly asked the audience two songs into his performance at The Replay Lounge on Friday evening. It was a question heavily steeped in irony. For one, Bill Goffrier was once a member of the legendary underground art-punk band **The Embarrassment**, a band that Robert Christgau, no less, called a "great lost American band dispersed into the wilds of Wichita."

The irony was that Goffrier, of course, was not playing punk rock, but instead playing acoustic renditions of The Embarrassment's songs and material from later band Big Dipper. The audience, mostly art-punk lifers, was in on the joke from the beginning. But surely the appeal of catching Goffrier strum these songs -- some nearly thirty years old -- is that it reminds them of the punk rock iterations they grew up with.

Now, an early evening acoustic patio show at The Replay is a bit like a marshmallow-filled cowpie. With each artist you get increasingly close to the gooey sugary center, but it takes a lot of swallowing to get there.

First there was opener **Danny Pound**, whose set was gentle and innocuous: Perfect for marking time as the sun was setting, pleasant enough to enjoy a Replay burger while listening. But -- I hate to say it -- Pound and his bassist were bland and featureless. His lyrics were a tad arch, and his guitar work rudimentary and understated. To be fair, there were

technical difficulties, which resulted in the duo performing the same song twice, with extra false starts.

Moving closer to the center, we have Hutchinson's **John Eberly**, whose music was slightly more fleshed out and resonant, and whose vocals were slightly clearer and distinct. His vivid lyrics were carried in a plaintive and tender voice.



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John Eberly

But at the center (finally) we have Bill Goffrier, who owned the night with a nearly two-hour twenty-one song set. The reason these songs work in an acoustic context is because they are simply great songs. Electric or unplugged, they still hold their art-punk edginess. Though The

Embarrassment was great at creating spiky "blister pop," I've always valued the band's odd and pointed lyrics more than their sound. A particular early highlight of the night was Goffrier's "Patio Set," which was turned into a tale of paranoia through the surreal punchiness of lyrics delivered dolorously against crisp plucking. *We sat in a corner like a patio set / a table between us with two drinks on it*, sang Goffrier. However, not all songs were performed with this level of abstract moodiness.



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Most, in fact, were approached casually, as if ripped spur-of-the-moment from Goffrier's songbook. Goffrier often called out for requests, and obliged his merch man, playing "I Only Want a Date." Laughter erupted at the lyric *I tend to overrate you but I've been obsessed / I only want to date you, it's my Johnny Quest*. It's a silly line, but what sold the moment -- and what cinched much of the evening's performance -- was Goffrier's sly charm. Goffrier exhibited a frank awareness of his cult. He was playful and confident. He rendered his old songs with energy, and never relied solely on the rotteness that comes with material as well-worn as his. Goffrier's animated gestures and wry banter made the evening feel incredibly special, even intimate; the good company of the night was mostly old friends and fans, who often participated with sing-a-longs. And just for the fuck of it, Goffrier opened *and* closed with "Rhinstone Cowboy."



Bill Goffrier and John Eberly

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