

Paw

August 1995

Mark Hennessy - vocals

Grant Fitch - guitars

Peter Fitch - drums

Sometimes all you need is a little faith and a fifth of bad whiskey. And maybe a freezer full of crappie for frying when the hard-drinking nights turn into hangover mornings. Paw, Lawrence, Kansas' wayward sons have all that -- and the result: **DEATH TO TRAITORS** an awesome follow-up to their fist-in-the-face debut, **DRAGLINE**.

"Everyone is bored and boring/not me I am drunk and roaring," growls lead vocalist/sometime painter Mark Hennessy on the opening track, "No Such Luck." You can bet Hennessy and brothers Grant and Peter Fitch live hard...and love it. When they're off the road, they take their leisure time pretty seriously, whether it's spent squealing through Lawrence in Mark's '66 Dodge pickup, swimming at the local hole, or shotgun-blastin' the guts out of old TVs. When the musical spirit moves them, as it often does, they write new songs and practice -- though they never, ever, practice 'til they've driven down to the lake for a cool swim and a few beers. "It's a law I insisted upon," says Hennessy. "It's good for your mental health to sit around on a float with greasy food in your belly."

The band's cavernous Lawrence farmhouse, a good seven miles from downtown activity, is peacefully remote, and lends itself to rollickin' late-night jam sessions, driving Harleys up staircases and burning furniture. "It's all ashes in the driveway," says Hennessy. "It's a four in the morning thing."

Paw isn't just a band, it's a way of life. They don't bother separating their music from their personal lives and they care as much about their Kansas micro-culture as they do their songs and about each other. If you look in the right places around Lawrence, chances are you'll find them together.

They've lived like this since 1990 when the brothers Fitch emigrated from Chicago and hooked up with Hennessy who'd moved to Lawrence from Kansas City -- their initial goal: to go to school; the result: forming a band. Their first record (which, released in 1993, sold over 100,000) and tour of 240 shows in a little over a year exposed them to countless fans across the States and Europe. "We played an average of five shows a week for 15 months," remembers Grant. "We stayed in motion for over a year tearing things up wherever we went."

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"Bands that are driven to do something, that struggle through hard times, they've gotta love what they do so deep down it becomes something greater than even a love for the music," says Peter. Hennessy writes about the challenges the band faced on the road in "No Such Luck:" "Not one bed I call my own/All I want is to be left alone/But there's no place that I call home." "We had no homes except for hotel rooms," he says. "It wore on our sanity, but we wouldn't have wanted it any other way."

To recover, the band returned home after the last tour and, much to their record company's chagrin, proceeded to shun modern communication conveniences like phones, faxes and television. It was their way to concentrate on the good stuff: making music, reading cool books, (Jim Thompson, Flannery O'Connor) and becoming serious anglers.

What holds the band together is that their relationship with each other is more fraternal than musical, more loving and respectful than simply tolerant. You can see their bond in Grant's respect for his younger brother and you can hear it in Mark's literate lyrical perceptions. Check out "Seasoned Glove," a line Peter gave Mark, a song Mark wrote for the brothers, as he did with "Sleeping Bag" on **DRAGLINE**. "What they go through touches me," says Hennessy. "For some reason I am able to portray what affects them, if not accurately, then sensitively." On record, on stage and in person, Paw translate their own unique lives for us in such a sublime way that we can't help but be affected by them. Spend a few hours with them and you'll know what we mean.

Recorded in the dead of winter at Pachyderm Studios in Minneapolis, **DEATH TO TRAITORS** is an intensely creative byproduct of the band's bacchanalian lifestyle. It features a first: Grant's singing debut on "Last One" and "Texas." Overall, the record is a remarkable leap forward in terms of musicianship and songwriting and finds Paw zooming in on a clearly defined sonic vision.

From the scorching Van Halen-ish groove of "No Such Luck," to the Duane Allman-inspired instrumental "Peach," and the vibrant first single, "Hope I Die Tonight," Paw do what they do best, moving from hard-edge guitar noise to emotion-filled melody. "A large part of music for me is destruction and a large part of destruction for me is emotion," says Hennessy. That destruction manifests itself in the full-force venom of cuts like "Death To Traitors" and "Max The Silent" and poignantly in songs like "Glue Mouth Kid" and "Built Low."

DEATH TO TRAITORS is colorful, top-heavy rock with the modern rev of punk and the melodic energy, a crossroads where big gun influences like Van Halen and the Allmans meet up with more grounded favorites: X, Bullet LaVolta and Nirvana. It's too down-to-earth to be hyped, too good to be dismissed.

"On **DRAGLINE**," explains Peter, "a lot of the emotion came from the sheer power and delivery of the song. On this record the power is more in the subtleties than in the bombacities. We envisioned **DRAGLINE** the same way we envisioned this record, we just pulled it off better this time."