



A Disgrace To The Gothic Establishment

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When I was in college, a friend of mine was in a band called Cureless. The idea behind Cureless was that the popular band the Cure, which is commonly thought of as depressing, was and is not depressing enough. In exact terminology, the members of Cureless considered the Cure to be a disgrace to the gothic establishment. To that point, Cureless, ostensibly a Cure cover band, existed solely in order to one-up the Cure.

For example: all upbeat songs—"Why Can't I Be You," "Caterpillar Girl," "Boys Don't Cry"—were slowed down to a dirge. The singer, Anthony, who wasn't my friend and as far as I could tell wasn't anybody's friend, didn't sing so much as speak, and didn't speak so much as mumble the lyrics.

But more than anything, my friend Steve and his bandmates felt that it was their duty to alter the songs in minor ways that would, in a perfect world, properly distress any sane-minded listener. Thus "Without You" became "Without Limbs," "Why Can't I Be You" became "Why Can't I Be Dead," and "Pictures of You" became "Pictures of My Dead Body." They could have shortened "Dead Body" to "Corpse," but they chose not to. The word "corpse," they felt, only romanticized a bleak, unromantic world.

On and off campus they became inordinately popular, to the point that a Cureless show was treated like a real event. People from all parts of campus and all parts of the city—hippies, jocks, goths, punks, preppies—all showed up to hear "Friday I'm In My Grave" and "Too Close To Me," the lyrics of which involved the rotting corpses, or dead bodies, of aborted fetuses.

Like any band, however, they were perfectionists, and Anthony, clearly distrustful of any misinterpretation of his intent, would introduce every song with a lengthy, often half-hour long, dissertation on his disappointment with the way the song had turned out. "I'm not trying to suggest that aborted fetuses are a bad thing," he would say. "Or a good thing."

He would then go on to explain that he didn't think the government had a right to make laws about our bodies. This lecture was inevitably followed by an explanation as to why, nevertheless, women should have no rights to their own bodies. Then he'd get defensive and say that men didn't have any rights, either, which was regrettable but exactly as it should be. Once, for laughs, I asked him loudly from the front row if all of this was because of the treatment of animals, and, if so, should we treasure animals more and become vegans?

The response lasted two hours, involved thirteen specific examples of crimes animals had committed that recommended that we not romanticize them overmuch, and reportedly was considered responsible for three reported suicide attempts the next morning. The set that night consisted of one song—"Too Close To Me"—

and even then extended by fifteen minutes past the noise curfew and half an hour past the last bus back to campus.

Nevertheless, as I say, Cureless was inordinately popular both on campus and off. Their shows consistently sold out at the Catalyst, the local bar-and-venue that also gave us our regular dose of Superbooty and Cheap Trick shows. College students, professors, shop owners, and homeless people would crowd into the place to hear, on a good night, five or six very slowly played Cure songs mumbled in a hardly coherent monotone, preceded as always by a defense of Anthony's motives.

We all had our Cureless shirts, too. The most common one was a black T-shirt with the band's name lettered on in black, below which was a black picture of blackness. Others involved pictures of unicorns, a picture of a kissing androgynous couple with a red X over it, or—my favorite—the complete transcript of one of Anthony's longer apologies.

This last was also featured as a series of bumper stickers, numbering just over thirty, which in a best-case scenario the ardent fan would completely cover his car with. More commonly, fans would choose just one sticker, generally at random, and figure that if they parked near thirty other Cureless fans, the complete message would become clear.

Unfortunately, like all things in this bleak world, Cureless couldn't last for long. When the drummer graduated after six years of study in the History of Consciousness Department and left town, Anthony began to talk about betrayal. A lot. They replaced the drummer but the new drummer looked out of place, with his tie-dye and dreadlocks, and he seemed lacking in heart.

Anthony talked about that a lot on stage. Before almost every song. My friend Steve, who played keyboard and who, let's face it, was a little gay, had a shit-ton to say about that.

The new speeches might not have killed the band, being still within the general realm of their themes, but then the bassist started dating a girl and could be seen, frequently, smiling or moving his head as he played. This Anthony could not handle, and one last night—at what was to be their final, ultimate concert—Anthony gave a four hour speech on the emptiness of human affection, knocked over his mic, and left the stage without singing a single song.

He was never seen again. But I like to think that, somewhere, Anthony continues to live his dream, depressing the Hell out of college students and selling unnecessarily large quantities of black picture of blackness bumper stickers.