

IF YOUR IDEA OF ROCK IS ALL ANGST, AGGRESSION, and white noise . . . better turn the page. Dig out an old Public Image Limited album, pour yourself a tall Jagermeister, and read through a chapter or two of Bill Burroughs. Renew that subscription to *Your Flesh* magazine, then drive the neighbors batty with the new Babes in Toyland cranked to wall-rumbling levels.

But if you want to smile from ear to ear, head to **The Cabooze** this Thursday for a CD release party starring **Auto Body Experience**. You'll observe a great group of musicians hard at work crafting melody, harmony, rhythm, and rhyme into something mirthful and magical. Get an earful of the smartest pop combo currently working in town as they sail through tunes from their new **Dental Records** debut release.

For the uninitiated, Auto Body Experience is guitar mainstay **Scott Yoho**, former leader of **Atomic Theory** recording artists the **Crops**; keyboardist, actor, and industrial video guy **Tom Hambleton**; bassist **Erik Fratzke**, who also plays with hard rockers **Love Kit**; and drummer **Matt Jacobs**, a seasoned veteran of the West Bank R&B scene (**Big Walter Smith & the Groove Merchants**, **Smokin' Walleyes**, etc.). Yoho was written up in *Guitar Player* magazine while still a teenager. He's a phenom who can handle blues, swing jazz, Led Zeppelin, and reggae, in addition to faultless pop. Here's a cool credit: Yoho has crisscrossed the United States with "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" himself — '60s star **Gene Pitney**.

The other Auto Body guys are no slouches, either. Hambleton contributed to the nationally distributed video *Harvest Town*. Fratzke earned his own profile write-up in *Guitar Player* (February, 1989). And Jacobs has traveled the country with **Peter Noone**, of **Herman's Hermits** renown.

But none of that biographical flotsam will prepare you for the left-field brilliance of Auto Body Experience's best songs. The band can sound like a kind-spirited Mothers of Invention, or a technically masterful Something Fierce. They're as dryly ironic as Steely Dan one moment, as wacky as Fatt City the next. This is a combo of serious players and ridiculous conceits.

On the new CD, Auto Body cooks up tunes about vegetables, pool toys, know-it-alls, grocery shopping, and corporate clowns. This hip quartet consistently avoids the obvious.

"Seedless Hydroponic Cucumber" is ABE's masterpiece. It's a jazz-fueled web of mystery and lust set in the checkout line of a supermarket. "Is Mr. Carlson In?" rates a close second. Here's the sad saga of an ordinary Joe trying to get an appointment with a high-powered business exec. You'll laugh, you'll cry, he'll fail.



Auto Body Experience — left-field brilliance.

"Animals' Rights" reminds listeners how hard it is to be completely politically correct. "Bald-Headed Hoseman" paints a portrait of a grinning suburban ghoul — a pool maintenance man. "Let Us Be" details a failed romance in vegetarian terms, and the puns fly faster than tennis balls at Wimbledon.

All the above songs have *great* lyrics, printed for your convenience in the CD booklet. Auto Body's efforts also sport swell melodies, crackling beats, catchy hooks, hot solos, and fine vocals. But don't take my word for that. Pick up a copy of the disc, then proceed directly to **The Cabooze**.

At the gala CD release party, you'll also enjoy a reunion set by the **Sleepers**. Head Sleepers songwriter **Gary Rue** is flying back home from Nashville specifically for the event. And ABE's big night will likewise mark comedian **Joel Hodgson's** premier solo guitar recital. Yoho teaches guitar at **Knut-Koupee**, and the star of TV's *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* is one of his prize pupils. Anybody out there remember Hodgson's old rock band, **Joel & the Joels**? If so, you know the deadpan funnyman *needed* guitar lessons.

Toss in sax and trumpet by the **Car Horns**, and what have you got? A wonderful night down on Cedar Avenue. Tickets are just \$4, so take a few friends along. See ya there.

DENTAL RECORDS

TWIN CITIES

THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

Grooves IN Orbit

BY TOM SUROWICZ