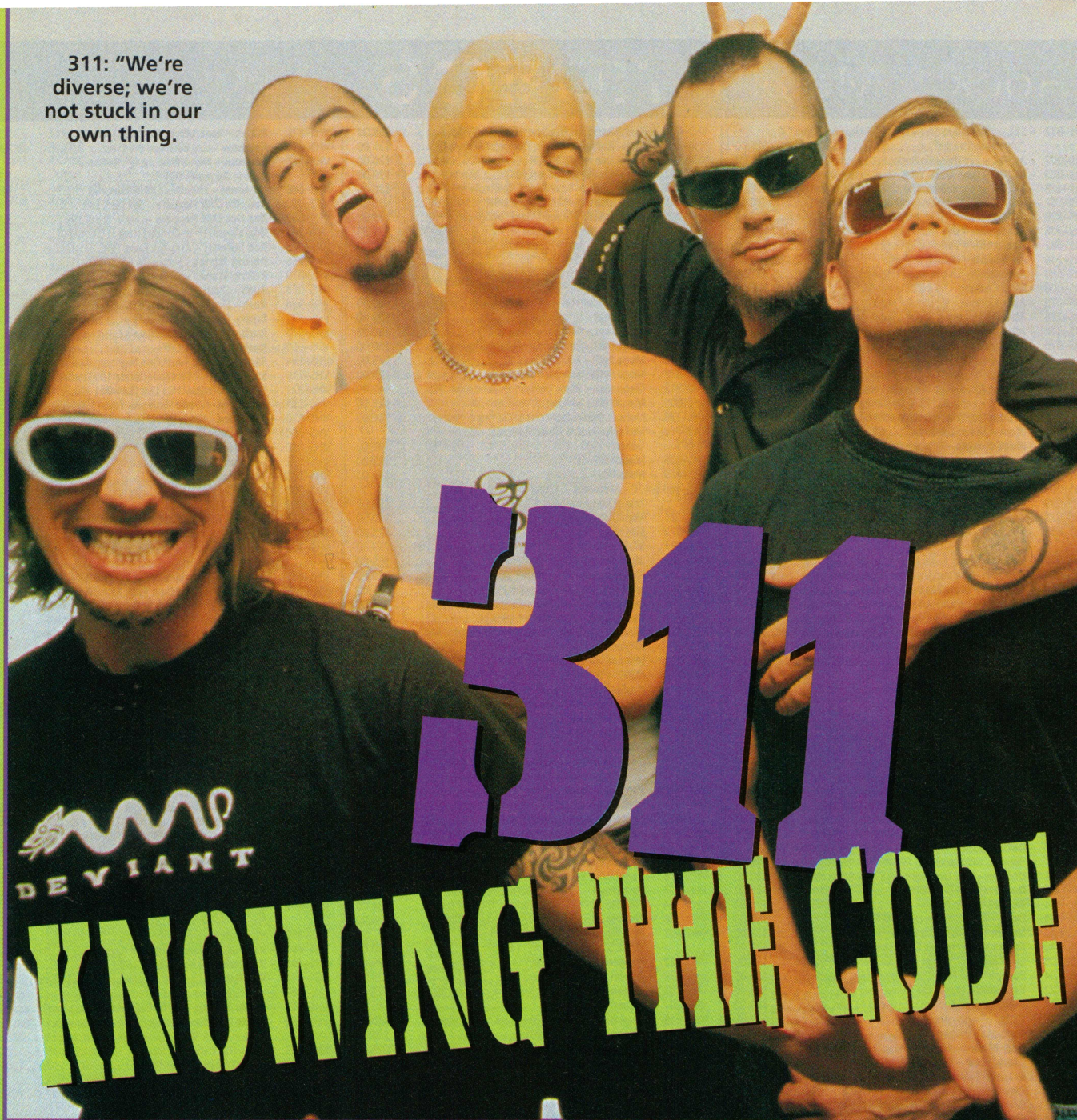


311: "We're diverse; we're not stuck in our own thing."



311's all mixed up. Are they a rock band? Undoubtedly. A funk band? Sure? Rap? Yup. Reggae? Uh-huh. One must presume that the only way that any semblance of balance could ever have been achieved would be via the same route of Marie being a little bit country and Donny being a little bit rock and roll.

"Back when we were first working together on doing this kind of music it did come from each of us being in separate areas, but since we've been together for six years and we've made music throughout that whole period, our styles have really blended. And now it's more confusing because we're all listening to the same sorts of things," bassist for the band, P-Nut explains.

311's *All Mixed Up*, the second single

BY VINNIE PENN

from their self-titled release, is a reflection of that unabashed mixing of musical styles. A tropical-flavored pudding swirl of hip-hop vocals and hard rock riffs, the tune is a colossal left-turn after the gritty mayhem that was *Down*, the record's first single, and the band's breakthrough.

"I like that. I like that a lot," the artist formerly known as Aaron Mills says. "That definitely shows people that we're diverse and not stuck in our own thing. We're not going to bore you. We're not going to flog a dead horse... that's the expression I was looking for. We're always going to be changing it up, and I definitely want people to know that."

Anyone who has the latest record already is well aware of 311's artistic flex-

ibility. Not only was *Down* predominantly hardcore and *All Mixed Up* of a mellow making, but tracks like *Purpose* and *DLMD* (which of course is an acronym for *Don't Let Me Down* fuse genres together without warning. Some songs are like a mood ring on the finger of a manic-depressive.

What does remain consistent throughout the record, however, is the quintet's positive outlook, an outlook that is occasionally camouflaged by the chaotic nature of the music.

"Well, that does seem to happen, especially because we tend to thrive on the live show," P-Nut proclaims. "If you just look at us play you probably wouldn't be able to tell that we're singing about enjoying life. So it does kind of cross over in a weird way. But,

we're definitely very positive."

That positivity pulsates on the antagonistic, rapid-fire rocker, *Guns (Are for Pussies)*.

"That's a positive thing from the other side of it," he says. "It's kind of like being angry about something that so normal in America. Everybody's got a gun. It brings out a positive message in an angry way."

The message is somewhat apropos considering the five fellas who make up

for a fair amount of time, and have put out three major label recordings, there is still an "introducing yourself" mentality to much of their eponymous third release. *Down* brought anyone who had been along for the ride up to date with the feverish chorus of "We've changed a lot and then some, some/You know that we have always been down, down". And *T&P Combo*, the funky, fist-waver that closes the disc, finds the boys bragging, "We played in a little house where

songs, really, for 311. They've just been coming up with the songs for so long. Chad used to write 20-part drum lines for the Drum Corps back in Omaha, and his team got number one in the district just because Chad knows what he's doing. And Nick's been writing songs since he was, like, six. He's an old piano player, and if you have that background you can write music easily."

You would be hard-pressed to uncover any tickling of the ivories layered into 311's music, however. Though a turntable does turn up on more than a few cuts, furiously put to work by co-lead vocalist Martinez (he and Hexum share duties).

"Most bands that do use turntables really rely on them," pontificates P-Nut. "It's a staple. Usually, there will be a DAT player, two turntables, and some MC's, right? For us, we've already got a band behind it, so the turntables just enhance what we're are doing."

"We're definitely not going to bore you—we're into so many different things."

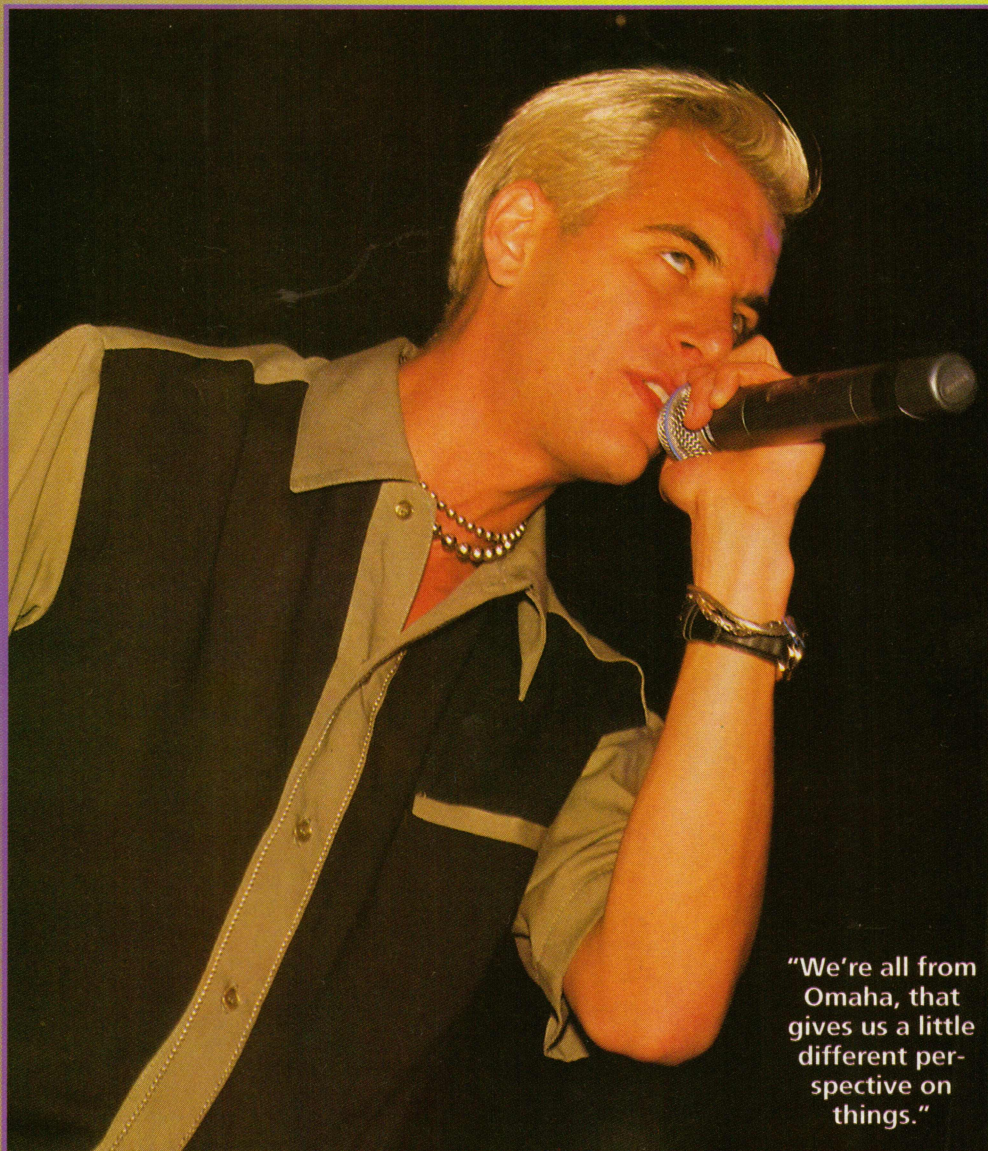
SA adds in fills because there aren't really turntable parts written down or anything. It fills up space with an instrument used in a way that it's not relied on."

With 311, recently surpassing the Platinum milestone—a year and a half after its June '95 release—the band, with producer Ron Saint Germain, seemingly know whereof they speak. And record number four is presently in the works, slated for an early summer release.

"I've already written two songs for the next one," he says. "It's going to dabble in the 311 realm of music and it will expand, too. More mile-a-minute stuff. I've got some really cool stuff going on it and I can't wait for people to hear it. I wrote a song on my fretless and I wrote a ska song."

Any working titles?

"Actually," says the guy who earned his nick-name as a result of slapping his bass so furiously one day, a friend or two said the veins bulging from his head made it look like a peanut, "I'm really fond of Working Title."



"We're all from Omaha, that gives us a little different perspective on things."

311 (Nicholas hexum, Timothy Mahoney, SA Martinez, Chad Sexton, and the ever-present P-Nut) all grew up in middle America (Nebraska, to be exact) and then relocated to Southern California in 1992.

"Yeah, we were all in Omaha, and Nick, Tim, and Chad all went to the same school, same year, and played in different bands together, too," informs P-Nut. "Those are the West Siders. And then the South Siders are me and SA. And we went to the same school, except he graduated just before I got there."

But, while the guys have been together

conditions got squalid/ But where we are now—solid".

That's one of the reasons we self-titled the record," P-Nut admits. "We knew that this was going to be the introduction for the so-called average American to be able to hear us, because before that it was all word-of-mouth. We were just a good live show. And it's funny that you should mention *T&P* because that's the only song I had a hand in writing for the record. That song is definitely my style mixed in with Tim."

"Chad and Nick come up with the