

Hank IV are an anomaly. On one hand they have that been-there, done-that knowledge that is the result of being involved in the scene for so long. On the other hand they maintain a righteous we-do-whatever-we-want-because-it-doesn't-matter-what-the-fuck-you-think-about-our-music attitude usually associated with inexperienced youth. They could easily sell-out, but they couldn't really sell-out if they wanted to. And that is just fine with them. Their third album *HIV III* will be out November 2010 on Silbreeze records.

Interview by Carolyn Keddy
Photos Mark Murrman

MRR: So Hank IV? Why don't you first tell me how the band got together?

Anthony: Bob and I are staring at each other semi-meaningfully. It started at the Casanova Lounge over many, many cocktails at the bar. The concept for the band was created on a bar napkin.

MRR: Is that a good place to create a band?

Anthony: Yeah, that vortex where the bar juts out and kind of keeps the front parts separate from the back parts, that area is pretty much where every band I have ever been in has

formed. The taint of the bar is where the magic happens.

Bob: A lot of bands get formed, but very few get carried out. That's why we had to get it down on a napkin so we wouldn't forget it. The next day we had notes.

MRR: So that's how you survived.

Anthony: We have a napkin with a bunch of different variations of the HIV logo.

MRR: And why HIV?

Anthony: So when Hank Williams grandson Hank the Third has a kid that kid cannot grow up to be Hank IV. It's that easy.

Bob: You saw that on the internet, didn't you?

Anthony: Probably.

Bob: *96 Hours* asked that same question.

MRR: Oh, really?

Bob: You got scooped by the *Chronicle*, Carolyn.

Chris: What's in a name?

Anthony: They're asking the hard question over at the *Chron* for a change. They're asking Hank IV the hard questions, but they're playing softball with Caltrans and the Bay Bridge.

Bob: They're asking the hard questions as opposed to other publications who've asked what the lyrics are about in a song that is an

instrumental.

Chris: And what's your favorite spoon?

Anthony: I think it was what's your favorite time to spoon?

Chris: Oh any time really. You've got to set aside a good hour.

MRR: On tour or something.

Bob: Chris and I spoon on this couch.

Scott: Anthony, Chris and I slept head to toe a la Three Stooges style in a bed in Italy.

Chris: Every morning we were serenaded by a stonemason working next door, gently lulling us awake with traditional Italian folk songs.

Anthony: I didn't realize "That's Amoré" was such a big hit in Italy as it is here in America.

Chris: Dean Martin.

Bob: I thought the sleeping arrangement was left in Bologna.

Anthony: Not anymore.

MRR: Does it drive you guys crazy when people are talking about you in the press?

Bob: That drives us...I just wanna say I am driven crazy with all of the mentions and talk of Hank IV in the press.

MRR: No. Whenever they mention you in the press they always say that you guys are older punks.

HANK IV

Hank IV are:
Bob McDonald – vocals
Anthony Bedard – guitar & vocals
Andy Oglesby – guitar
Chris Portfolio – bass
Scott Jones – drums



Chris: Well, they're not lying. They're pursuing honesty in journalism.
MRR: Why do they point it out?

Anthony: Goddamnit. Another publication with a fact checker. I thought they got rid of the fact checker during the great journalistic editorial purge of 2009. I think it's more of a novelty thing.

Chris: I didn't appreciate the comment that there were pieces of dirt younger than Hank IV.

Anthony: Older than dirt, somewhat younger than the sun.

Chris: I don't know. I like it. It's nice to be able to appall younger people a little bit.

MRR: Do you appall them?

Chris: Frequently.

MRR: In what way?

Chris: I don't know. Just that open slack-jawed kind of uhhlhlh.

Anthony: They appall me.

Chris: Yeah. They appall us, so that feeling is mutual.

MRR: What do you do about it?

Chris: Play.

Anthony: Bob ramps up the dance moves.

Chris: He finds that special someone.

Bob: Act degenerate.

MRR: What do people think of you dance moves?

Bob: I guess they seem to like them.

MRR: Yeah.

Bob: It doesn't really matter I'm not stopping at all.

Anthony: I'll say this, the word "riveting".

Chris: Yeah. That about covers it.

Anthony: Pretty much wraps it up.

Bob: They usually say like "Wow, you sure were up there."

Chris: "You guys were doing it."

Bob: "On that stage alright."

Scott: What did Sadie say about you the first time?

Bob: She said she felt bad for me.

Chris: She's our first drummer's daughter.

Bob: She was eight or nine at the time.

Anthony: Our first drummer's eight-year-old daughter.

Chris: She felt embarrassed for Bob.

Anthony: She was embarrassed.

Chris: Not for herself though, but for Bob. She's very astute.

Anthony: So I think, you know, maybe a lot of people who see us they're either embarrassed for us starting around age eight and you either never get over it or...

Bob: People were just kind of waiting to see if I would eventually get hurt and I actually did.

Anthony: You didn't let them down.

MRR: But it didn't stop you, right?

Bob: No. I finished the show, writhing in pain.

MRR: What show was it?

Chris: With Pierced Arrows at Bottom Of The Hill. What was? It two years ago now?

Bob: Yeah.

Anthony: On the second song of the set, Bob pumped up in the air and did a mid-air shimmy pivot with a half-pike twirl.

Bob: A half-pike Watusi.

Chris: A lot of people don't realize there's quite a bit of Bob Fosse in what Bob does on stage.

Anthony: A quarter-nelson with a shake 'n bake.

Chris: Remember that movie *All That Jazz* with Roy Scheider?

Anthony: This is *Hank IV - All That Jazz*.

All: ewwww.

Bob: That'll stop me.

Anthony: Yup, you're over.

Chris: An image of a Hazmat containment barrel pops readily in my mind's eye.

MRR: Tell me about what you are recording right now.

Chris: Well, you know, Scott is under the deadline of an imminent family expansion as it were and we wanted to get down...We had about seven new songs that we've been playing live for about six months. We were really tight as a band so we said let's just take what we got and record it instead of coming back to it later in a few

months. And so we did.

Anthony: The stultifying truth.

Bob: Because we can.

Chris: Yeah, because we can.

MRR: Was it like the last recording session?

Chris: We didn't take as many breaks.

MRR: Did you guys rile Bob up like you like to do?

Chris: Toward the end everyone was getting riled.

Bob: I wasn't.

MRR: I'm sorry Bob hates it when I mention it.

Bob: I haven't had my riling moment yet because I haven't done my part.

MRR: Oh, you haven't.

Chris: We'll put him in the vocal room and get him singing. It's just us talking to him through headphones for a good couple hours and there'll be a bit of riling going on.

Bob: I expect to be pissed.

Chris: We try to send him in there in a bad mood, just gradually pick away at what he's doing during the course of the day. Then, the magic happens.

Scott: We're taking advantage of this whole chill building production facility business. What you're soaking up. We had the ability to do this one ourselves and just kind of wanted to go at our own pace.

Chris: It turned out to be faster than the last time recorded. Well, for the basic stuff.

MRR: Are you recording it all yourself?

Scott: Yup.

Chris: Well, I'm nervous, everyone has to sign off on it.

MRR: But you're doing it yourself?

Chris: Yeah, I'm the person. I'll take responsibility for that.

Bob: Yes, you will.

Chris: When we recorded with Tim Green last year, we just kinda couldn't get over the fact that we showed up, set up and he said

"let's take a break."

Anthony: Tim Green said more than once "So, uh, you guys want to take a break and actually do some recording now?"

Bob: No.

Anthony: I'll say Chris is an excellent engineer, but one thing he doesn't quite have is the back catalog of in-between-song spoken-word moments between band members. Tim Green basically has an entire library of every band he has ever recorded. He's got the Nixon tapes of the recording world.

Bob: All the arguments.

MRR: Does he let you listen to them?

Chris: He'll pull some.

Anthony: The arguments, the commentary.

Chris: It rivals when Al Kooper would run tape in between session and he would put out vinyl, maybe like a hundred copies every Christmas, of what he would just call a comedy record. It was all these hands just imploding in the studio.

Anthony: Tim Green is sitting on a quite a collection of blackmail material, but he doesn't play you everything that he's got. He kind of tailors what he plays to the specific band that's in the studio at that time.

Scott: He picked the right band for us.

Anthony: Yeah.

MRR: What did he pick for you?

Scott: We can't say.

MRR: Maybe later, off the record?

Anthony: We've already said too much.

MRR: Wow.

Chris: You can't breach that trust otherwise the whole thing will go away. But it's nice because you listen to it and you think, "Well thank Christ that's not us."

Bob: I want to know who he's played us for.

Anthony: Yeah, exactly. We're being held out as some abject object lesson.

Chris: Even our bitter arguments usually just resolve to some foot gazing and passive aggressive just "mmmmmmmm". A lot of

hurumping and...

Bob: I'm going outside.

Chris: Yeah. I need a smoke. But you don't smoke. Oh, I'll just go outside then.

Bob: I'm smoking right now.

MRR: Do you guys mostly get along?

Chris: Oh yeah. We were friends before.

Anthony: (laughs) We were friends before, but that's (singing) all over now.

Scott: We're willing to put it to the test. That's why we formed a band.

Anthony: (singing) Oh, we used to be friendly...

Chris: I think we already put our various friendships to the test in situations outside of the band. So we already kind of knew what the tensility was. It was like, a band? That will be easy.

Bob: As long as we're never in the band longer than getting the hope.

Chris: That's kind of a given, that's kind of part of the age thing. Like I'm never getting in a van and driving across country anytime in my lifetime.

MRR: But you guys go on tour, right?

Chris: Well, kind of.

Bob: A weekend.

Chris: We go on rock-cations. It's an out-of-pocket, personal growth experience.

Anthony: It's like outward bound for a bunch of aging, degenerate, alcoholics.

(everyone laughs)

Chris: That's really a nice encapsulation actually.

Anthony: But the difference being a lot of those people in outward bound they never make it back.

MRR: But you guys all did.

Chris: If we were younger I suppose we would tour. But we all have pretty responsible jobs, we just can't. We have to stay with what we can do and how we live.

Anthony: Someone asked Nick Cave "Is Birthday Party ever going to get back together?" Nick Cave just looked at the guy with this withering look and said, "Birthday Party was a young man's game."

Bob: And one of them is dead.

Chris: I remember seeing the Bad Seeds when they did that Lollapalooza and they played at like three in the afternoon. It was weird in the daylight and all these kids were like, "Who's that guy?"

Anthony: When I was at Ozzfest, all of a sudden this band came on, the stage spun around 180 degrees and this band started playing. The thousands of kids around me all jumped up and started singing along and I said, "Who is this?" It was Papa Roach.

(laughs)

Bob: I like Papa Roach.

Anthony: They were good. I'm going to finish hanging myself here in *Maximum Rockroll*. Papa Roach were better than Marilyn Manson at Ozzfest. There it is. Good night.

MRR: Have you guys played opening for a younger band where everyone just kind of looked at you?

Andy: The Ted Leo show was kind of like that.

Chris: Yeah.

Anthony: But he's kind of our age.

Chris: When we played at the Knitting Factory in New York with Mudhoney, it was an all ages show.

Anthony: Oh, yeah.

Chris: They have a door to the stage and it's got a glass window in it. Bob and I were standing and we're thinking it's one-way glass, like a mirror on the other side. There's all these kids in the front row like sixteen years old. Then we realize it is not one-way glass when they all look at us and they're like "hey".

Bob: While we were playing there were two different couples right in front of the stage

making out through our whole set.

Andy: Hank IV, music for lovers.

MRR: That always happens when I DJ at the Casanova. There's always a couple making out on the couch.

Chris: That's the Casanova. They'd be doing that if there was dead silence.

Scott: Lowlifes and alcohol.

Anthony: If you were to look back five minutes later you would notice that the trap door under the couch has dumped that couple down into the Shanghai basement and that couple is now proof reading for Pitchfork.

Scott: Or fact checking for the *Guardian*.

Anthony: They're interns for the music industry now.

MRR: Why should everyone listen to the Hank IV?

Chris: Cause we play rock'n'roll without hyphens or parenthesis.

MRR: And? Tell me more about Hank IV.

Chris: We got nothing.

Anthony: I'm still mulling over why people should listen to Hank IV.

Scott: Yeah, no shit.

Chris: We couldn't come up with a reason.

MRR: Andy, why do you play in Hank IV? What do you like about it?

Anthony: Yeah.

Bob: Hot seat.

MRR: Not to put you on the spot or anything.

Chris: Don't look at your shoes.

Anthony: It's the new segment—on the hot seat.

Andy: Well the whole age of the band thing

is just kind of something. Something and nothing at the same time. We kind of joke about it, but... we're not rehashing things that we already did. For me anyway this band is the most complete, cathartic, most interesting and involved thing I've probably done. And it just happens to occur after a lot of other things. So instead of rehashing something we're working toward doing new stuff that's really interesting to me. So for me that is what Hank IV is about. Being able to do that at this ripe age.

Bob: You should listen to Hank IV because old guys are doing it right.

MRR: How long will you keep doing it?

Anthony: How much longer can we go? We've been doing it for four or five years.

Chris: Every time we try and stop, some one will clamor for more or want us to do a record or something. We didn't even want to do the first record. We tried to talk them out of it.

Anthony: Hard rocking, noisy, cathartic rock... for kids of all ages, from five to fifty.

Chris: It's so weird that the one big comparison is to Crime or '77 era Cleveland punk rock which is just like basically rock dudes who were playing something that wasn't quite rock. They didn't know what to call it yet. That's what I think we do. None of us have any really big intention of what we should sound like. It is usually after we play something for a while then we go well it sounds like that.

Scott: Yeah, you wouldn't put the Hank IV sound together on paper. You wouldn't try to draw a diagram and say that the band is going to sound like this.

Anthony: (laughs) Yeah, you wouldn't unless you were drunk at a bar with a pen and a soggy napkin.

Andy: Then you would. And under no other circumstances should it ever be attempted.

Scott: But I think it was just a matter of who would be fun to play in a band with. We had no idea what it would sound like.

Well, I think you guys had an idea what you were after, but..

Chris: It didn't quite translate.

MRR: Do you guys all have a punk rock background?

Scott: I don't know. Yeah.

Chris: Yeah, for the most part.

Anthony: Bob.

Chris: Well, we know Bob.

MRR: Tell us about your punk rock background Bob?

Bob: I was probably when I was sixteen.

Chris: What year was that Bob?

Bob: 1981.

MRR: Were you guys all in bands when you were sixteen?

Chris: Oh yeah.

Andy: Yeah.

Anthony: Yeah.

Scott: Yup.

Andy: Scott and I were actually in North Carolina at the same time and never were in bands [together], but we were always in a couple of different bands in the same town, the same time. I guess I was in All Tore Up when we first met.

Scott: Yeah, yeah he was the drummer in this punk rock band called All Tore Up. They opened for the Ramones and that was like...

Andy: I peaked early. (laughs)

Scott: They all peaked early.

Scott: We did play with one band together.

Andy: Oh. Yeah. Waffle Pussy.

Scott: Waffle Pussy. Yeah. There's a website.

Chris: Just Google image that.

Andy: I was in bands in those days, but they don't even bear publication in an internet newsletter, never mind this fine, fine stalwart magazine.

MRR: You know someone out there has the cassette.

Andy: Oh, I know. That's why I'm not going to tell you.

Bob: I played with Bum Kon, The Roadkill 5, Angry Cowboys.

Chris: What about the Circus one?

Bob: Bad Circus.

Chris: Bob's sitting on the second Bum Kon record, which is a work of genius.

Anthony: He's literally sitting on it.

Chris: Right now. It's under the couch holding that end up.

Anthony: It's broken into about eight or nine shards of vinyl.

Chris: What is it? Meat Grinder?

Bob: Ground Round.

Anthony: Is it named after the restaurant? Ground Round was like a proto-Chucky Cheese minus the mascot.

Anthony: It's rock for people who love rock. It doesn't matter. Even the youth like Ty Segall, he's into it. Whatever. It's like people who like real deal rock like the Hank IV.

Bob: Utrillo's there.

Anthony: We're playing to please ourselves and people who like rock'n'roll. It's beyond. It's not fashion. It's not trendy.

Chris: It's certainly not fashion.

Anthony: We're too old to become a buzz band. You know? All that kind of shit. All the shit that goes on with young twenty-something kids who are young enough to go and fucking live like dogs on the road and go and do all that fucking bullshit. Hank IV is still you know whatever. I don't even know what else compares right now. The only thing is Mission Of Burma putting out three amazing albums twenty years after the fact. And that shit is as good or better than so much other stuff that is out there.

Chris: Yeah.

Anthony: I am not even saying we're... I mean we're doing something, you know, different, similar but different, you know, I'm not putting us in with that, but at the same time it's just we're rockin' out and...

Chris: One thing that comes with age is that we tend to not wear any of our influences on our sleeve anymore. Like the novelty of doing that is pretty far past us. (laughs)

Scott: Yeah.

Anthony: Yeah.

Bob: I'm thinking that starting up a DIY band would be pretty cool now.

Chris: I'll buy you a Robert Smith wig if you do that.

Bob: Cool.

Chris: Then it will or won't it?

Bob: I'd need to lose a little weight.

Chris: No you don't. That's what's great about it.

MRR: Have you seen him lately?

Bob: Have you seen me lately?

Anthony: I gotta go.

