

**arts and literature  
from a different  
perspective**

**kamikaze**  
volume three

issue twenty-eight

# minnesota music:

*whatever happened to*

*The Swoon?*

*and young upstarts*

*Junno Janai*

**A L S O**

**piercing**

**interviews**

**w i t h**

**PIERCE**

**PETTIS**

**DAVID**

**PIERCE**

**and this other one**

**w i t h**

**comedian**

**P A U L**

**ALDRICH**

IN THE  
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3 TIMES  
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## In the next issue of the Kamikaze:

- ▶ **THE UNDERGROUND** will be the cover feature, highlighting Christian zines and zine-makers, as well as underground music. (please mail us your thoughts and comments)
- ▶ We shall deliver on our overdue Crimson Thorn interview, as well as interviews with The Clergy and others.
- ▶ More thought-provoking commentary, poetry, and art, as well as another fantastic short story.
- ▶ Until then, enjoy this one and God bless all the Kamikazes of the world.

**CHRISTIAN WRITERS AND BANDS:** send your demos (or other recordings on cassette or cd) and your chapbooks (or other books in publication) for review in the Kamikaze DEPRAVE section. Bands, please, include a full lyric sheet (your words are very important), and, writers, include a backgrounder on who you are and why (we want to know). Please, send all correspondence (i.e. lovely packages bearing musical and/or literary offerings) to: Kamikaze DEPRAVE, 2441 103rd Lane NW, Minneapolis, MN 55433-4528.

# kamikaze

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The purpose of kamikaze magazine is two-fold: to encourage and to inform christian artists and writers by providing them with a forum for presenting their work, and, also, to be a christian voice in the secular arts community. kamikaze, "The Divine Wind," refers to the holy spirit, who directs the work of artists and writers as followers of Jesus Christ.

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# TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK:

## THE STORY OF THE SWOON

BY STEPHEN KNIGHT



THIS IS THE STORY OF THE SWOON, a small alternative rock band that rose from a small town in Minnesota to a national recording contract with a Christian label, before returning to the shadows from which they came. Their story is not a perfect one, nor is this a complete rendering of it, but it is characteristic of any city's local music scene. Teenage friends in a small town decide to start a band. They each choose an instrument and start to play. At first, they are noisy and off-key, but they learn and they grow. What makes The Swoon's story a little more interesting, a little more impor-

The Swoon, as they appeared on the cover of the June 1988 issue of *Ragtime*:  
(clockwise from left)  
Emmett Dacey,  
Dan Lancaster,  
Austin Dacey,  
and Jeana  
Gillespie.

tant perhaps, is the fact that their musical progression and their spiritual progression are intimately entwined. As they took two steps forward, into music and into Christianity, they rose to some level of success and fame (they seem to be something of an icon in the Christian underground music scene). Still, as they stepped away from the faith of their youth, they faltered until disbanding.

Their story begins in Cottonwood, Minnesota, where Dan Lancaster, Jeana Gillespie, and Austin and Emmett Dacey grew up. In an interview with *Ragtime*, a fanzine run by Charles Clark (who would become the band's manager at one point) in June of 1988, Lancaster explained, "We decided to start a band in the summer of 1984 shortly after we had experienced a religious [born again] conversion. I had been a fringe believer growing up in a Christian home. There was no band [before that] but the four of us were friends. We were a D&D [Dungeons & Dragons] group and we had a fondness for music." [ed—all quotes from Lancaster hereafter are taken from this 1988 interview.] Emmett was the only member who had actually taken lessons before the band began. He would play the drums while Lancaster played bass and sang, Jeana played the keyboards, and Austin played guitar. Lancaster's father was a minister in the small town and they began to play concerts in the church there. Lancaster was 16, Emmett was 15, Jeana was 12, and Austin was 11. They called themselves Restricted Access.

Their first recording was a 5 or 6 song demo done on a reel-to-reel, just one track and no overdubs. It had a pretty raw sound and the band called it *Take One*. As Lancaster explained, "Essentially that's what it was. It was just one take, one track, in December 1984." The only original song that appeared on *Take One* that the band held on to for awhile was "Dead Men Don't Smoke Cigarettes," the other songs fell by the wayside. In the summer of 1985, they went back into the studio and recorded *Retrograde Inversion*. Clark called it "a boombox recording" and it was not much more than that. It was much like *Take One*, with just one take on just one track, but the band reproduced it more than their first. "We had a jacket and probably sold about 30 copies," Lancaster recalled.

In 1986, the band played in the Battle of the Bands at the New Union, where Charles Clark initially hooked up with them. The band did not even place in the tournament that year. Clark's advice to them at that time was to take lessons because they were still unpolished. The band did go on and practice regularly. In the spring of 1987, they released *Church of Wires*, which was recorded in an 8-track studio but "without any serious engineering or

production," Lancaster said. They sold approximately 30 copies of that, as well. They also performed in the Battle of the Bands once again and placed in the top three, garnering them a spot at Sunshine Festival in Willmar, Minnesota. In July of 1987, the band released *Jacob's Tears*, which featured some live songs as well as a few cuts from *Church of Wires*, to sell at Sunshine.

In 1988, they played in the Band tournament again and took third place. The band had recorded a new album entitled *Ben Son Ben Son Beatrice*. Lancaster had derived the title from a passage in one of the books of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in which "the true love of God" is personified as a creature named Beatrice. The line is Latin meaning "I am, I am (indeed) Beatrice." Clark

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recalled Lancaster's intense interest in classical literature and mysticism, and how it played a role in forming the imagery of his songwriting. The album was recorded at Johnny Audio, a studio in Minneapolis, then owned by the band Limited Warranty. Lancaster commented, "I was not pleased with how *Ben Son* turned out. It's not bad but we weren't allowed in on the production end of it, which is a bit silly in my opinion because we wrote the songs. It serves its purpose, I guess. It's essentially a demo tape. We've gotten mixed response. Mostly positive but some people complain that it doesn't represent the whole scope of our music and I know that's true. It represents more of the artistic side of the band. There's no real rock and roll on *Ben Son* and people who see us live are often disappointed with the tape, because of that. Almost everyone I've talked to prefers us live." Clark recalled the band's raucous renditions of "16 Miles On The Erie Canal," "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," and "The One I Love" as being show-stoppers. Lancaster also noted the band's song "Go No Stop" as being the song he would play "if I was given only one song to perform on stage." He explained, "[It's] one of our oldest songs, maybe the greatest song we've ever written. Somehow that song, in its simplicity, is so alive and so full of what the band is about that it never gets old and it manages to capture the audience every time we play it." Those who have lived to tell the tales all admit that *The Swoon* could mesmerize.

WHEN THE BIG HOOPLA HULLIBALOU IS ALL  
OVER AND NO MORE WHOP WHOP BANG  
JANG A LANG SOCK HOP CLICK CLOP.  
WHEN TROY IS DRAGGING ON A DRUM  
ROLL AND EMMETT IS PACKING THE  
DRUMS UP THAT'S WHEN AUSTIN SAYS,  
"HAMBURGERS" AND I SAYS,  
"CHEESEBURGERS." WHEN EVERYONE'S ALL  
SNUGGLY CRAMPED WISH I COULD SLEEP IN  
THE BAD VAN BANDMOBILE AND THE MILES  
SLIP UNDERNEATH THE HEADLAMPS: "DID  
WE SWOON?" WONDERS JAMES HANDS ON  
THE WHEEL. "GIMME THEM SPITS." SAYS  
AUSTIN. "NONE LEFT." I SAYS. "F'KER." HE  
SAYS. "SHUDDUP" TROY SAYS. "WE  
SWOONED 'EM." SAYS JAMES HANDS ON  
THE WHEEL. "SEE YOU SWOON BENSON  
BEAT RICE." EMMETT SAYS EYES HALF OPEN.  
HOW LONG TIL I CAN STRETCH MY LEGS I  
WONDER. AND WE ALL SAYS, "THE SWINE.  
THE SPOON. SWOONIGATOR TWO, THE ES  
DOUBLE YOU OH OH END."

-LINER NOTES TO THE SWOON'S  
POSTHUMOUS RELEASE  
*SPECTACULAR ILLUSIONS*

In 1988, the band, then known simply as Access, performed live at Cornerstone Festival, outside of Chicago. They were signed to Wonderland Records by Caesar Kalinowski shortly thereafter. Clark had stopped working with the band and Jim Shryer, who had produced *Ben Son* (under the moniker James) stepped in as their manager. Jeana had

left the band to get married at age 18. At this point, Troy Baartman joined the band playing bass, which freed Lancaster up to sing and play the flute. Austin filled in with the keyboard parts, while still playing guitar. The band suddenly changed their name to *The Swoon* before traveling to California where they lived with Derri Daugherty's (The Choir) parents and recorded at Neverland Studios. The album was produced by Charlie Peacock though the stories about his actual involvement in the project have been varied. Emmett explained that Peacock did not want the album released with his production credits on it because he was not interested in being associated with the band. Charles Clark however has said that Peacock "slept" during most of the production. In either case, some

(SWOON continued next page)


important and professional people were involved in The Swoon's only release, under some confusing and mysterious circumstances.

No matter what Peacock's wishes may have been, the album was released by Narrowpath Records in association with Refuge Records. The album featured five new songs on side one under the title "Neverland," with the five Ben Son songs on side two. After its release, The Swoon returned to Minneapolis where they "labored in obscurity," as Charles Clark explained. The band played many shows at local clubs, where a series of events led to the breakup of the band and to an ultimate questioning of their Christian faith. "I don't believe any of the members would consider themselves Christians any more, except maybe Dan," former drummer Emmett Dacey concluded.

Austin went on to record a 4-track instrumental work called *What I Did On My Summer Vacation*, which Charles Clark heralds as a piece of musical genius. Clark explained that Austin has since gone on to study at Evergreen College in Washington state, where Kurt Cobain "cut his teeth" when trying to get Nirvana off the ground. Austin's brother Emmett has since gone on to become the manager of a used record store in St. Paul, and continues to play drums locally with Nero's House Band. Dan Lancaster lives in the Twin Cities with his wife and two children. Only keyboardist Jeana Gillespie remains in rural Cottonwood.

In October of 1991, The Swoon posthumously recorded *Spectacular Illusions* live to 1/4 inch at Control Sound Studios in Minneapolis. Only about 100 copies of the album were made. Some were sold at the Renaissance Festival under the title *Piss and Vinegar*, though it has been known by many other titles, as well. The album features ten of the last songs the band had written together. At one time they were a group of Christians," Clark explained, "They were never a Christian band." Though many who have heard their music or remember seeing them perform may wish they were still together, Clark believes that their break-up was the best thing for them. "Had they continued, it probably would have killed them. It's the excesses of rock and roll." \*

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the entire 1988 Ragtime interview with Dan Lancaster and any information about receiving a copy of The Swoon's posthumous release *Spectacular Illusions*, send a SASE to: The Swoon, 2441 103rd Lane NW, Minneapolis, MN 55433-4528.

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