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Wichita Gone Wild: The Embarrassment's "Patio Set" Revisited



The Embarrassment were an unlikely group. Formed in Wichita, KS, in 1979, they sounded every bit a coastal or foreign post-punk band, one that might've shaken hands with the Feelies (NJ), Mission of Burma (MA) or Monochrome Set (UK) -- contempo units that shared the same aptitude for nervous, twitchy songs, albeit in much more populous and liberal burghs in the U.S. and abroad.

But the Embos called Wichita home, and their location didn't slow them down a damn bit. Because if their area didn't have a scene calling for such original music, they'd just build one. Which they basically did.

"At the time, the local scene -- it was kind of ours to create," explains guitarist Bill Goffrier today. "And the people who came to see us early on were sort of arty, intellectual types."

Most of those arty, intellectual types came from local universities. Some were wayward high schoolers. Some were general outsiders. A few had their own bands, like the Mortal Micronotz and Get Smart!, who hailed from nearby Lawrence, KS.

Of the three mentioned, the Embos were the first to release a single: 1980's "Sex Drive" b/w "Patio Set." Their debut 45 was a smart, minimal, oblique slab of double entendres and angular guitar chug. And it was, like most great r'n'r, an ingenious mix of caveman, troubador and horndog.



In the case of the Embarrassment, it was also an accomplished stride forward from a promising new gang of smartasses. "And we were proud of making that step," says Goffrier. "We had a lot of missteps leading up to that, so the single was kind of a milestone."

It remains a milestone today: one of the Great Plains' coolest forays into cracked post-punk territory. Last Laugh Records will reissue the single early next month. You can contact the label [here](#) to get your own.

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I bought it at Wax Trax in Chicago. Love it so much I wrote to the band and told them if they ever needed a place to stay in Chicago, subsequently putting them up on couches a few time in the early 80s. Smart, funny, nice guys. And an absolutely phenomenal live band.

Posted by: Steve Lafreniere | [September 29, 2011 at 04:50 PM](#)

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