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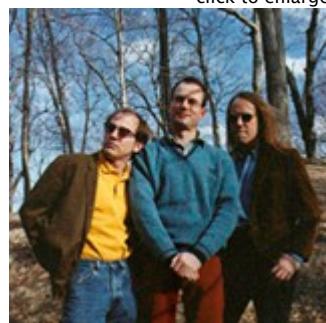
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The high-flying Bill Goffrier

by David Hudnall

The Embarrassment, a group of Wichita smart alecks who tasted underground fame playing twitchy post-punk in the early 1980s, is correctly remembered as one of Kansas' musical treasures. Many fans of the band followed vocalist and guitarist Bill Goffrier on to Big Dipper, the acclaimed, nervy guitar-pop act that he slid into in 1985 after moving to Boston. (For those who didn't, the remastered, three-CD Big Dipper anthology *Supercluster*, released by Merge Records in 2008, is a good place to start.)



Less is known about Saucer, a Goffrier-led trio that played around Boston for about a year following Big Dipper's breakup in 1992. But now, the cult of Goffrier has six new tracks to greedily binge upon, due to the release in late 2011 of *The Saucer Years*.

"It didn't occur to me to release the Saucer tracks until I discussed with the other members of Big Dipper just how we would handle releasing a new Big Dipper album," Goffrier says. "We aren't signed to any label currently, and we were considering doing it all ourselves in 2012. I had already been compiling and editing the Saucer tracks in Wichita with my friend Tom Page. So I offered to be the guinea pig and release a DIY EP."

Saucer was made up of three-quarters of the final Big Dipper lineup: Goffrier, bassist John Styklunas, and drummer Woody Giessmann (who played with both the Embarrassment and the recently reunited Del Fuegos). Naturally, *The Saucer Years* reflects some of Big Dipper's REM-style sensibilities — acoustic guitars run like a current beneath the more prominent electric guitars, imbuing the album with a warm jangle.

But 1992 was a transitional time in rock, and there are also traces of the looming tilt of grunge on *The Saucer Years* — one foot in the '80s indie-rock underground, one toeing the raging waters in Seattle. Or maybe those cranked-up numbers are more of a throwback to the Embos' jagged punk sound? It could go either way. Some of the lyrics firmly situate us in the early 1990s, though. *The next president-elect/Is politically erect*, Goffrier sings on "The Next President," a welcome reminder that everybody already knew Clinton was a hornball before they elected him. After two decades, it's easy to forget little details like that, just as it's easy to forget about short-lived bands that wrote a handful of smart pop songs and then quickly faded away. Good thing we've got the Internet, and guys like Bill Goffrier willing to share old demos.

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