



**THE HAUNT, ITHACA NY - DECEMBER 5, 1996**

*For 13 years now, Long Island's Scofflaws have heated up the NYC SKA hotbed. In fact, they significantly helped shape today's 3rd wave, bringing their hard to come by precision, and jazzy style of play with them. Their live performances are impeccable to say the least. See this band at all costs! I gave their lead singer a taco and he in return, gave us this interview.*

**INTERVIEW WITH THE SCOFFLAWS. TAKE ONE. WELL FIRST OF ALL HOW THE HELL DO YOU REMEMBER ME FROM YOUR LAST SHOW HERE SIX + MONTHS AGO?**

RICHARD BROOKS: We don't forget faces - if somebody has been to a coupla shows, we remember them.

**WE LOST OUR QUESTION SHEET - ACTUALLY IT'S IN THE CAR - SO WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WING THIS ONE... SPUR OF THE MOMENT**

RB: We'll wing it....but you already had some pre-formed questions, right? Ideas formulated...

**CAN YOU GIVE OUR READERS A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCOFFLAWS? WHEN & WHERE YOU STARTED?**

RB: Yeah, about 12 years ago I had this group around Long Island known as the New Bohemians, and we had some of the people in this band... Well Paul [Gebhardt, bari sax] was working with me in that band, we were starting to play ska....

**WAS THAT WITH EDIE BRICKELL? MRS. PAUL SIMON?**

RB: Well we ended up selling that name to them, after they got signed to the major label. They needed it, we settled with them. Our lawyers met, spoke and all that type of thing. So we needed to call ourselves something, I was having a phone conversation with a friend and we got on discussing various possibilities for names and then a light went on and I said "Scofflaws!" that's cool, that's rude [roode], let's use that! And that's what we did.

**I HEARD ABOUT A BAND MEMBER GETTING A PARKING TICKET OR A SUMMONS IN COURT OR SOMETHING.**

RB: Someone who's a scofflaw, as you may know, has collected a bunch of parking tickets, violations & then you're deemed a scofflaw by the state.

**SO WHAT ABOUT LINEUP CHANGES WITH MEMBERS OF THE BAND OVER THE YEARS AND WHATNOT?**

RB: Lineup changes, that's inevitable in any group, because as things progress, grow, different people have different ideas for what they want to do and how much they want to give a project. A lot of people would like to do it, but maybe

they can't travel, they have a serious job, the band's bound to change. Some people simply burn out after a couple of years. Like this isn't my bag anymore, I've got to do something else, stuff like that.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE HAVING BEEN AROUND FOR SO LONG AND SEEING THE CURRENT THIRD WAVE OF SKA, COMPARED TO THE SKA WORLD OF JUST A HANDFUL OF BANDS WHEN YOU GUYS STARTED, TO THE THOUSANDS THERE ARE TODAY?**

RB: Well it's nice to see a lot of people getting involved, but I do have one beef with some of the new bands that I think some of them don't have their thing developed enough. They need a little more rehearsal time. We see some of these bands and they get up on stage and they make a lot of errors, they don't really groove right, it can really hurt the music....

'Cause when people come down and see a band that can't really play, they say "Oh yeah, ska...I saw that, I didn't like it" So I think it hurts the people who have been in the business a long time, that have worked really hard to have a good smooth running show happening. It's a double edged sword. It's nice to see so many young people with a lot of enthusiasm getting into it, but some of the bands just sound so raw, I have a hard time listening to them, I usually go hide in the back room.

**WHY DO YOU PLAY HERE AT THE HAUNT / ITHACA SO MUCH?**

RB: Why? Because we're welcomed here, and we have a good fanbase here. We enjoy it here, we have fun here, and it's not far away So it's something that works out well.

**WE'RE FROM ROCHESTER, ANY PLANS TO PLAY THERE AGAIN ANYTIME SOON?**

RB: We've played there a couple times at the Boogie Bar. We'd like to come around more often, it's just so far away, ya know, and there's nothing else near it.

**C'MON, IT'S ONLY 2 HOURS FROM HERE**

RB: Right...(laughter) We probably will be back there sometime soon. We did it for a while, but the thing is we'd come in mid-week and it was a hard equation for us to solve.

**(A. Hitchcock) THERE'S NOT A HUGE ROCHESTER SCENE**

RB: There you go. For a real ska group, it's hard. We never really had a night where we hit the ball out of the park up there, so they weren't really hesitant in making it worth our while...

**WHAT WAS THE FIRST INSTANCE, YOUR FIRST REALIZATION THAT YOU WANTED TO PLAY SKA MUSIC?**

RB: Me personally? I just enjoyed the music and the attitude and the style. I'd have to say the 1980's ska revival groups had a big influence on me. I was fortunate enough to see a few of them in their heyday. They had a very high quality of musicianship in those groups.

I mean when they took to the stage they all had tight, good sets & it was a lot of fun.

**AS OF THIS MOMENT, I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU GUYS LIVE BEFORE, MY COLLEAGUE HAS, AND HE CLAIMS THE SCOFFLAWS ARE THE BEST LIVE SKA ACT HE'S EVER SEEN. SUPPOSEDLY THE ENERGY DOESN'T QUIT FOR OVER 2 HOURS. WITH A PERFORMANCE LIKE THAT, HOW MANY SHOWS PER WEEK DO YOU PLAY?**

RB: On average 3 or 4 nights a week.

**HOW MUCH TRAVELLING IN BETWEEN? OR JUST AROUND NYC?**

RB: Well around New York and around the country. When we're on tour we do night after night. We'll do a week and maybe get a night off after 10 days. [When we're] at home, maybe twice a week, but on average its about 4 nights a week. So that's how I came up with that figure.

**'CAUSE YOU GUYS ARE PRETTY ENERGETIC ONSTAGE, IT MUST GET PRETTY TIRING, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT**

RB: Ya know what it is? It's that we have this philosophy: That's how it's done and that's how ya do it...I don't think about being tired or anything after the show...If anything it energizes me. "The more you do, the more you will do". If you sit home & say, I'm tired I won't go out, you won't go out. Where if you get yourself out, then you say, wow man! I really had a good time. I didn't feel like going out earlier, but thank god I did.

**GOOD POINT. WHAT MADE YOU WRITE THE SONG PAUL GETTY? ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY?**

RB: Paul Getty, of course the eccentric multi-millionaire from American History... He owned Getty Fuels..You're probably younger than I am, but his son was kidnapped and held for ransom and his captors sent Paul his own son's ear. Yeah, he's still alive. I don't think they ever found his son, which is kind of a sad story, but that's why it pays not to have a lot of money. Once you get a lot of \$\$\$, then you have to deal with things like that. Money is not a cure-all for problems.

**WHAT'S ON DECK NEXT FOR THE SCOFFLAWS IN '97?**

RB: Next? National tour, a live record and another studio record. Some video footage being shot for Nude Beach, and perhaps this summer, a trip to Europe.

**WOW. DO YOU HAVE TIME FOR MANY INTERVIEWS?**

RB: I just did one before dinner. I get quite a few.

**DO YOU FIND PEOPLE GENERALLY TEND TO ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTIONS?**

RB: Yes, because they want to know things about the group, so naturally, people will ask similar questions.

**DO YOU GET SICK OF ANSWERING THEM OVER AND OVER AGAIN?**

RB: Well, I try to reword them the best I can. I don't get sick of answering the same questions because people want to know. But I mean ...for example, I was on a radio show one time and we traveled to get there, we set aside time to do it

and we get into the studio booth, then the guy sits down, says "You're on the Air", okay cool, then he says, "So, what's up?" I replied: "Well not too much, what's new with you?" So he says "Aaaa. I haven't been doing much lately..." Even if people are asking the same questions, at least they have them prepared. I don't mind answering them. Even though much of this information is the same, we have this web site thing happening and on there it's going to have our history, members and things like that, so this information will be accessible to people. The same questions will become more common knowledge and I'll get asked more diverse questions.

**WHEN TAKING A SHIT, DO YOU CRUMPLE, ROLL, OR FOLD THE TOILET PAPER?**

RB: Let me just say that as soon as it hits the water, I flush it down, that way the smell is minimized, and then I carefully fold the paper several times before I go anywhere near back there.

BUFORD O'SULLIVAN [trombonist]: It even helps to have a phrase for the toilet situation..."If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down!" That's the ecology phrase.

RB: Mayor Koch said that during the water shortage...

You could explain that on submarines.

**EVERY TIME WE ASK THAT THE RESPONSES KEEP GETTING BETTER AND BETTER THAN THE ONE BEFORE. THAT'S GREAT! WHAT MAKES THIS INTERVIEW MORE OUTSTANDING?**

RB: Your girlfriend's hair color

**OKAY... SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND THOUGH... BUT SO, WHAT'S UP? JUST KIDDING. IF E.T.'S SOCIETY AND THE SMURFS WAGED WAR AGAINST EACH OTHER, WHO'D WIN?**

RB: I don't know..I've seen E.T., but I don't really watch The Smurfs.. I don't know if they're tough guys or not.

**WHAT ABOUT G.I. JOE?**

RB: He's cool. Wait.. D'ya know he's cool, but Barbie's a lot cooler.

**MUCH COOLER. COLD WAR TOYS - I THINK WE'LL WRAP IT UP AT THAT.**

RB: But if you dressed Barbie up in Joe's clothes...

**ANY FINAL WORDS?**

"We come in peace for all civilized beings of the universe"

THE END.

**THE SCOFFLAWS: <WWW.SCOFFLAWS.COM>  
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