

## Rock And Rubber Mallets

By Michelle Duffy Born out of a religious devotion to one of the greatest exponents of all that was ever Metal; Metallica, Alien Ant Farm housed a quartet of cheeky, wholesome Californian nerds. Perhaps, four of the most unpredictable and unimaginable rock stars ever to grace the U.S, these ordinary looking kids off the block blazed into teenage vulnerability around 1996. In strange and extreme arrogance, their first album was titled 'Greatest Hits,' released in the U.S in November 1999. In America, it managed to con the teens into submissiveness and an award was promptly handed out to the band the same year at the L.A Music Awards. The Brits, on the other hand, were having none of that and the LP failed to create even the slightest dent over here. After all, we invented Metal. We already knew what it was like to feel our ear drums bleed - e had Ozzy Thunderous, thrashy and somewhat Alice In Chains tinted, the band, visually, can only be described as The Beastie Boys meets the Myth busters, or perhaps even Adam Sandler's lost cousins, yet there is something disturbingly appealing about these guys with their shaved heads and Scooby Doo tee shirts. They reflect a certain mood within all teenagers, but perhaps mostly towards kids in the U.S. Sniggering still at their farts and whistling at girls, it is not difficult to imagine that these fellas, loaded and famous as they are, still ring old ladies door bells in the middle of the night and run away laughing. Their contribution to the rock industry is merely down to taste. If you like your rock heavy on the bass and minus any real noticeable guitar riffs yet you prefer the lead vocal to actually sing in key, then AAF is certainly the band for you. If you ever become fortunate to see them live, then please don't be put off by the fact that they are not famous for putting on a show. The all-American named Dryden Mitchell does nothing to promote a form of eye candy. His hunched over stance with mouth busy tonguing the microphone is almost an imitation of Grindcore Gods, Napalm Death. Despite their visual effect and their ability to perform good, and surprisingly tuneful Metal music, they have, unlike a lot of their hero's, stayed far away from making any social comment. Choosing, I believe, to distance themselves from anything too political and topical, they have, in previous years, met only criticism from the media on how they were a bad influence on the youngsters of the Nineties generation. Although the critics were harsh, it was how the band unitedly stood their ground with great maturity that was perhaps, more shocking. AAF gave us another shock in September of 2001 by releasing their own take on Michael Jackson's 'Smooth Criminal.' This shaky, club classic dance number filled with all the glitz and styled glamour that was Jackson in his element, was probably one of the very last pieces of cover that any rock band would ever dare to take on, let alone endanger their already growing respect from other long haired rock giants already masterful. This daring take on such a record was tarnished with all the right amount of bass, heavy drums and chain saw styled guitars that was needed and leapt, peculiarly to number three in the singles charts in the U.K. The British kids were buying it at last. As a 'make sure' marketing ploy, the song was released again in February 2002 as the B side to the single, 'Movies,' which, again had enjoyed such huge success that it was released twice and instead of it's humble number 55, it sat readily at number five the second time around. For a group of four young lads, all born between 1971 and 1977, it is surprising that in the years of Alien Ant Farm being around, they have only managed to release five singles. Four of which were two songs released twice, and only two chart positioning albums to 2003. At a glance, one could argue that they are the laziest rock band in existence, failing to produce a decent single and record a fairly passable album, but a closer look shows us that these musicians (and isn't it a blessing from God that we see a band that can actually play instruments? This is the only reason why I think Ben should win the X Factor) we can see that apart from the obvious single, these fellas have written everything. Like their counterparts of today and the giant Metal bands of the past, they are proud to say that they have not once leaned on others for their musical contribution to teenage album collections. They are humorous, thoughtful and, most of the time, polite. They are melodic, play in time and are good to their mothers. In my book, they possess all the makings of a fairly decent heavy rock band. Their music can't always be described as custom built heavy metal. In fact, many of you out there will be disagreeing with their title of Metal band as it is. For example, the jolliness of the backbone of 'Glow,' from the album 'TruANT,' (2003) is more Manic Street Preachers than Anthrax. Yet, 'These Days,' taken from the same album has a more grinding feel to its theme, hanging in the air with the heaviest of cobweb guitar riffs, the density of some of their work would have even Miss Havisham reaching for the duster. They had even tried their hands at deliberately mixing Spanish guitar with a darkly forcible bass line yet keeping the vocals strained and cutting. Working these layered Latin themes, this band takes on a whole new meaning and far from the Metal legends they are supposed to be. Although they still appear to be a bunch of guys fresh out on vacation from high school, they seem friendly, alluring, shy and very attractive to English speaking teens across the world. However geeky and freak loving, these giggling, immature youths on a Blair Witch Project trip shouldn't be regarded as what they appear to be. Frighteningly in 2001, the band came close to a major loss. Dryden Mitchell suffered a severe broken neck when the band's tour bus crashed after colliding with a big truck on route from Spain to Portugal at two o'clock one morning. After the initial shock and then being shown the devastating pictures of the remains of their twisted coach, the band took the incident as a true near death experience for all of them. Their work has since taken a more serious turn. Passing fans, probably won't notice anything different about this heavy metal band, but for Alien Ant Farm, their next album, 'TruANT,' released in August 2003, certainly lent towards a more definitive and reflective key. Though the band's style and lack of responsibility will pretty much, always shine through, it is their inner most souls that had been tarnished with the freak accident two years before. Due to extensive surgery to Mitchell following the smash, the band took time out whilst Mitchell lived for months in a halo brace around his head, holding it in place with screws and wires. The band now take on a whole new meaning yet again, yet this time, matured, edged and introspective, we wonder where the band go from here. After the release for the long awaited 'TruANT,' they seemed to have died a death as far as the Brits are concerned. Even though it had been noted that they are one of those rare bands that genuinely appreciate their fans, nothing seems to have come from the AAF camp for quite sometime. It is a shame as I do believe that we haven't, in many ways, not seen the best of Alien Ant Farm yet Dryden Mitchell - vocals

Terry Corso - guitar

Tye Zamora - bass/vocals

Mike Cosgrove - drums

DreamWorks records Album releases; Greatest Hits - November 1999 (cd)

ANTology - March 2001 (cd)

TruANT - August 2003 (cd) ©michelle duffy 2006 Also on ciao and dooyoo (sam1942). 2006.

## About the Author

Michelle is a freelance writer in the South of England and owner of the websites, [www.generationsounds.co.uk](http://www.generationsounds.co.uk), nevermindthebloggers.bravehost.com and their successful sister, 'Never Mind The Bloggers' at paperback-writer29.tripod.com. She has been writing over the last year, for five major consumer websites across the world and is one of the only two music category advisors for one website in the U.K. Her websites promote young, amateur and professional bands/artists and their fan clubs whilst also reviewing them for local and world wide promotion. She has also recently launched the blogs; 'The Ramblings Of An Old Rocker,' 'Bohemian Waffle,' 'The Rhythm Rock And Blues Machine' and 'The Moped's Musings' and 'Generation Sound Suite.' She is currently working on two shops selling her music styled artwork and now sells on Ebay.  
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