

LABEL PROFILE Has Anyone Ever Told You?

by Mike Conklin

Austin, Texas' Has Anyone Ever Told You? has made a name for itself recently by putting out strong and well-received releases from the likes of Egon, And We Talked About Murder, and The Search For Saturnalia. We recently had the chance to speak with the label's founders Jennifer Perkins and Chris Boehk, and they've been kind enough to share their thoughts AND their records. Check out what Jen and Chris have to say about the label, the Austin scene, Napster, and a few other pertinent issues, and then fill out a quick survey for a chance to win some cool stuff. **Has Anyone Ever Told you** has been kind enough to offer copies of their last three releases to five lucky winners, so read up on what they're all about and maybe, if you're lucky, you'll get to hear what they're all about as well.

Basement Life: Where's the label based? Has Anyone Ever Told You?:The label is currently based out of our office in Austin, Texas - South Austin, that is, because that's the real Austin. Well, OK....really, it's the spare bedroom in our house. Once upon a time it was in my apartment, but I used the expansion of the business as a cheap excuse to move in together. Austin has as many fledgling labels as it does Mexican food restaurants, and that's a whole hell of a lot. At the same time with all the labels in town, rather than it creating a bunch of competition it really creates a more conducive atmosphere. Everyone is pretty willing to swap ideas and trade advice about where to get things pressed, who does cheap T-shirts, and all that important stuff. Bands flop from label to label, nothing is really exclusive. Some of the best advice we got in the beginning was from other local labels.

How'd the label get its start? Well, we wanted a way to put out music for our friends and by our friends. We had been dating for a while and one of our common bonds was this giant love for music. Chris was always in bands and I had always written for music zines or done one of my own. Running a record label seemed like a natural progression for us. In the world of business we seem to complement each other really well and take up each others' slack.

How many people work on the label? Right now, it is just the two of us. We do all the press, web design, mail outs, ad design, etc. At this point we are doing one release at a time so this is not all that difficult. If we ever expanded beyond that we might need some help. Does doing everything ourselves make us want to scream and cry and occasionally inflict bodily harm on each other? Yes! However, I pity the fool who ever has to come work for us. We are a fussy pair.

Bands currently on roster? The Search for Saturnalia were the first band on Has Anyone Ever Told You? We knew we wanted to release something by them first since they had been around awhile and had already released an EP themselves. After some consideration we decided on Egon as a flip side to a split 7" with TSFS, our first release. After that we worked with TSFS on a full length. Next came We Talked About Murder--another gaggle of our friends and a great rock band. We put out their CDEP. After then we worked with Egon again on their full-length release. Our latest release is Our Own Somewhere a solo project by Chris where he plays everything and anything.

How have you come into contact with the bands you've worked with? Well Chris is in several of them for one, so that made it easy. The Search for Saturnalia was around before we started the label. This was Chris's band at the time so it seemed only natural to release them. After a few months Chris and Mark, also from TSFS formed called We Talked About Murder. Although, half of WTAM is also half of TSFS you really cannot tell in the music. In TSFS, Chris plays drums and Mark bass. In WTAM, Chris plays bass and sings and Mark plays guitar and sings. The songwriters for each band are different. We met Egon through our friend that runs Slip Productions, a tour booking company. They booked for Egon and we had seen them play and knew their great potential and decided to act on it. They are a very hard working band who have been around awhile.

What are some labels you admire? We admire all independent record labels that put out great music just for the sake of putting out great music. For the most part this is not a venture that you are ever going to get rich and famous from. We admire people that give to the community and their scene, and not just take and reap the rewards of other people's hard work. One cannot truly understand how much work and dedication, not to mention a lot of time and a whole helluva lotta money, running a record label takes until you actually do it.

Is the label a full time gig for you? Full time is a relative thing. When there is a brand new release, I bet we spend about as much time working on label stuff as we do our regular full time jobs (both of us have desk jobs in office buildings - real exciting!). Things can get pretty hectic and we usually consume a lot of beer in order to relieve stress. As far as the label generating enough revenue to make it a full time job, the answer is no.

Is there a specific void in the music scene that you're trying to fill? No, we're just trying to cash-in on an over-saturated market before the bottom falls out and we have to pack it all up and sell something else. Actually, we started this as a way to put out our bands and our friends' bands. I wouldn't say that we are trying to fill a void specifically, because I'm not sure what is or what isn't lacking in the scene. We started this label so that we could contribute something to our musical community, to make Austin a better scene, to have fun, and meet new friends and that's about it.

As a label owner, how do you feel about Napster? Oh boy, Napster. This is a very grey area. I think Napster is a good and bad thing. On the good side, it gives people a chance to freely and easily share their music with the world. The Internet has the potential to do a lot for music by making it so much more accessible to people. On the bad side, you've got people uploading other people's music without their permission, which is wrong. We have some MP3's (one song from each full length release) on our site that we encourage people to listen to and share with people, but if I was to get on Napster and find that someone put the whole CD on there, I'd probably be pretty pissed. I don't think some people understand how much money it takes to put out records and we need to be able to make some of that back by selling records, so that we can put out more records.

What are the your plans for the next 12 months? Digging ourselves out of credit card debt is our main plan. We are going to continue to advertise and such for what we have through the spring and summer. Egon is going on a HUGE tour this summer so we will be putting a lot of time into helping them promote that. Look for a new release sometime in the fall of 2001 and keep checking our web site for updates.