

Interview with Al Haig of Dangling Eye

Charlie Webster

CW: Is Al Haig a stage name?

AH: Yes.

CW: How do you feel about Reagan?

AH: (Laughs) I do not like Ronald Reagan.

Kids today don't understand about Reagan. The Republicans worship him like he's George Washington II, and everyone else goes along. But what people forget is -

[15 minute rant follows. Excised for space.]

CW: Tell me about the weekend you spent in Chicago, with a video game in your van, around September, 1994.

AH: That's the three-way goatscrew that ended the band. And thank God, because that band had to be killed. We'd been playing since, '86, '87, okay? Couple records. No sales. Still playing shitty opening slots at some space some kid in bumshoot Nevada booked. I don't care if you're a Marxist, an Anarchist or a Zenist, you get sick of couches someday, and that day was four years ago for me.

We were passing through L.A. and crashing at a friend's place, and down the street was this junkyard. Chuck for Bucks. We swung by looking for parts for the van, which we did not find. But then Jesus H. saw that video game.

CW: The *Mr. Do!* game.

AH: I don't remember what it was. But Jesus H. had to have it. And he decided to give the guy at the junkyard practically all our money for it - \$800.

CW: Did he play video games?

AH: No, he was going to sell it to a sound guy who worked at the Lounge Ax and who he thought, on the basis of nothing, would be in the market for an \$800 video game. Which I am guessing now was worth half that, and way less if you told anyone it had been sitting next to a porta-john for four years, which I knew Jesus H. would tell anyone in

earshot, because he thought that was funny. He threw away all our money.

CW: Why didn't you stop him?

AH: I was in the porta-john when it happened.

CW: How did you get to Chicago?

AH: We were doing a few stops in the midwest, and a guy booked us an opening slot in Chicago. He was a total scattershot, barely got us the info in time, kept giving us the wrong phone numbers. Generally dragging his dick in the sand. But he called and told us we're booked at the Double Door, which was an incredible, who-did-we-blow-to-deserve-this shot at selling more than two t-shirts for the night. He said it was on the edge of the neighborhood but it was a real up-and-comer. One of the Velvets was playing there the next month. This was punk *man*.

Let me mention now, for the record, that I fucking *hate* Chicago. I hate Chicago rock. Hated Liz Phair - oh man, Jesus H. would listen to that tearstreak shit *all* the time.

But I'll give them one thing, they know how to party. We get in on a Thursday afternoon and the bars were all hopping like it was the Friday before Lent.

First stop, we go to the apartment where we were crashing. It was right next to the expressway in Bucktown, and somewhere north of twelve kids all lived there - all skeevy little jerks. Today we would call them hoodrats.

We had a deal: they let us stay there on the floor, and they offered to get our van to the club and lug in our gear - which was key, because my back wasn't what it once was. In return, we would buy beer for them. So we get into their apartment - which smells like the cats were using the toilet and the kids were using the litter - and I leave a copy of the fax we got from the club, and a note that says, "TAKE OUR VAN TO THIS CLUB. UNLOAD ALL OUR STUFF BY FRIDAY 5 PM, OR NO BEER FOR YOU."

CW: And you left your keys?

AH: We didn't need keys. The van was hot-wired, the doors didn't lock. We lost the keys years ago. Who's going to steal the fucking thing? It was rusty, and we had to crack the windows to keep from choking on the exhaust. Duct tape patches. Filthy area rug on the

corrugated floor. Jesus H.'s condoms all over the place. You know. It was a band van.

So we bus it over to the Lounge Ax. We get there around five or six and proceed to dick around at the bar for forever, drinking, while Jesus H. waits for his sound guy to show up. And once he does, lo and behold, the guy does not want to buy this stupid, shit-smelling video game that's stuck in the back of our van.

Now, I am beyond impatient. The bartender told me the Fall were playing at the Metro that night, and I've been a Fall fan forever, so that's where I wanted to go. And then we get there, and I find out that it was an early all-ages show and it's already over! I missed the Fall for Jesus H.'s bullshit, and instead I wind up watching - shit, I don't even know who the band was, some horrible art fuck metal thing with a really whiny singer.

Oh, and Jesus H. met some girl and went home with her. I'm waiting for him all night, and then he ditches us.

I was seething at this point. We head back to Bucktown, and by the time we get there, I *still* wanted to shove Jesus H.'s head up his own ass and roll him down the stairs.

Anyway. That's the first night. Next day we wake up on a floor. The hoodrats were all gone - I heard them bumping around at 3 AM, and said something about heading down to "the dunes," and they grabbed their meager possessions and left. By morning, they were all gone.

So, nursing a truly unsatisfying hangover, I sent Fuck to gas up the van, and I grabbed my knapsack of records and headed for the bus. I remember thinking that it was running really off schedule, and that pissed me off even more.

I hit a bunch of record stores, trying to push 7" on clerks who weren't dumb enough to give me money for them. And then around 7 I met up with the guys at the Double Door. Fuck is there. Jesus H. shows up - some slacker girl just dropped him off and was making out with him through the car window. I asked him if he had any luck finding someone to buy the video game, so we could get some money to, you know, live with. And of course he didn't. I could tell he didn't even try.

And then the wheels really started coming off this thing. Because we go in the club, and there's no gig.

CW: What do you mean?

AH: I mean they had no idea who the fuck we were. Didn't have us on the bill. Didn't have us on the guest list. All our gear, that should've been there two hours ago, was nowhere to be found. And the guy at the door has never heard of us. Neither has the booker.

Now that's cold. You can back out of giving someone a slot. Cancel on us, fine - not like *that's* never happened before. But to forget who we even are? Why don't you just kill my dog and eat it in front of me?

So we go back out to the van, because Fuck had driven it here to meet us. And that's Screw You #2. The van is gone.

Fuck goes up to where he parked it, and he just stares at the space with this really confused look on his face. "I parked it right here," he said, "I know it," and we look up and see a sign: "NO PARKING - VIOLATORS WILL BE TOWED."

And that was it. I was done.

CW: How do you mean?

AH: I walked up the street. I got on the subway. I took it to the bus station. I got on the bus. I went out east. I got the fuck away from there and crashed at my folks' for a month.

CW: Why didn't you go back for the van?

AH: And pay for it how? And what if someone had searched it and found our weed? Tow truck guys just love to bust your balls. Half of them are ex-cops, and the other half blow ex-cops. And you know what else? Fuck it. Fuck it completely. I didn't even want to look at it again.

CW: What are you doing now?

AH: English teacher at a high school. Best job I've ever had. All my kids are just like those goddamn hoodrats in Bucktown. And that's why I love it. 'Cause when I tell them to do something? Now those kids have to listen.