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VISITING ACT | Not So Sun, Sun, Sunny **The Elected's crabby Blake Sennett**

BY SHAWNTÉ SALABERT



Dear Blake Sennett,

Thanks for talkin' to me today, before debarking in — wait, what did you call it — "Shittown"? "Doodooville"? (FYI: I'm pretty sure the locals call it "Cleveland." Just think about that before you launch into any on-stage shout-outs.)

Anyway, I was really surprised when you played at the Farm last year with Rilo Kiley and packed it. That place never gets full. Well, except for that time GWAR played. But I had to leave early because I felt sick. GWAR will do that to you.

But here's what I really want to ask you, Blakey: why did you sound so morose on the phone? I know that the whole Rilo Kiley touring with Coldplay thing probably wore you out, because you had to spend several weeks dodging Gwyneth and the wee Martins, but are you really that depressed? I mean, we pretty much started our phone conversation with you telling me, "I hate life," and then kind of sarcastically suggesting that my own life was probably "full of vigor and a yen for each day." Not lately, but that's beside the point.

But seriously, dude, the new album by your "side project," The Elected, is called *Sun, Sun, Sun!* Now, isn't that a happy name for an album? The music's pretty upbeat, although all of the songs on there seem to be about what a lonely dude you are — love lost, breakups, lost lovers, and the like (which you reluctantly pointed out were autobiographical, after pretty much telling me that you hate talking about your songs and giving me the bozo generic "I guess I just write about life stuff" line).

Blakester, don't you have happy things to talk about? Do you always sound like Conor Oberst without his Zolof? Is there not a joyous bone in your body? I mean, you're in not just one, but two popular bands. People love your music. People want to curl their fingers around that new moustache of yours and pat you on your suede-vested back, and not just because they like guys who dress like they just dropped in from the '70s.

Despite the sad-sack lyrics, you generally write the kind of pretty songs that make me want to snuggle up on a bearskin rug in my nightie and write in my journal. With a cup of hot cocoa. It's warm stuff, and I'm just having a hard time reconciling that with this guy on the phone whose only response to my heaping piles of hot praise was a limp offering of, "I don't know. We bring the thunder, I guess."

Maybe you needed to talk about other things — like the CMJ Marathon, where you were playing last week! I figured we were on the right path when you called me "Shawntizzle" and offered to have your bassist sing a song at the show I was attending. We were buds! But then, you turned right back into Señor Sarcasmo and launched into a parody of CMJ-goers by spazzing out into the phone, "It's 2001! I've got to see Clinic! Oh my god, it's 2002 and I've got to see Ladytron!" right up until you hit 2006.

Actually, I didn't really mind that so much. It was at this point that you kind of commandeered the conversation into forcing me to go online and search for the name of the headmaster, or deacon, or whatever-the-hell-he's-called for the Polyphonic Spree (which we discovered is Tim DeLaughter, not Timmy Lovesnake, as you suggested).

You know, I realized that you were probably just tired. You did sound kind of happy when you told me that Elvis Costello once called bandmate Jenny Lewis to share his love for Rilo Kiley. The sun shone for a brief moment, Blake-o-rama, and that gives me hope that you might just keep on making good music instead of diving headfirst off of a cliff.

Affectionately,

Shawntizzle (I really love my new pet name — you said it with such warmth)