

MUSICBUZZ

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Femmes storm into town



WHEN one imagines the Violent Femmes on tour, it's all too easy to picture the Warner Brothers' Tasmanian Devil rampaging through the Australian outback, limbs flailing in a storm of destruction and entertaining noises.

They'll whirlwind their way into town on the August 25, but unlike Taz, their fury has a purpose: they're touring in support of *Permanent Record*, a career overview which, oddly enough, was designed to appeal to the broadest audience possible—"the casual fans," as guitarist and lead singer Gordon Gano fondly calls them.

Twenty years ago, he might not have cared about them at all.

Stranger still is the fact that it's their second "Best Of" compilation, the first being a 10-year retrospective released—well, about 10 years ago.

Recently, an interview with Gano provided *The Hook* with an interesting insight into a band whose members are now as far away from their first "Greatest Hits" album as they then were from their initial impact.

THE HOOK: Your market has always been hard to nail down. What kind of crowd do you draw these days?

GANO: Well, it's interesting. Many of the group's biggest fans weren't born when the first album came out. It does change depending on the venue, but we always get two generations quite easily.

THE HOOK: That's an interesting gap to straddle.

GANO: With us it's always a mix. Some fans leave us, and the words they throw around are "sold out," even if nothing's different except that we're

more popular. Even before our first record came out, there were people who were describing themselves as "former Violent Femmes fans." But then sometimes we play these shows—these rare occasions where we play a folk festival or something—where people have never heard us before, and they always end up liking us.

THE HOOK: Folk festivals?

GANO: Yeah, they're usually pretty receptive. We've played a few up in Canada, and one traveling show headlined by Joan Baez. And we all do other sorts of music, so we don't lose our minds.

THE HOOK: Speaking of which, your bassist, Brian Ritchie, having conquered everything else already, recently began focusing on a type of Japanese bamboo flute?

GANO: Yeah, he's completely dedicated to it. It's an everyday practice for him.

THE HOOK: How has your show changed over the years?

GANO: It hasn't, except that we've all gotten better at what we do, like our singing is a little more in tune. And Brian can play even more instruments.

THE HOOK: What does it feel like to look back and realize that the poster child for youthful expression has matured into the consummate rock and roll professional?

GANO: You're just guessing about that maturity part, right? That's a lot to assume.

Fans, former fans, and future former fans converge on the Charlottesville Pavilion at 7:30 Thursday, August 25. Tickets are \$10-22. charlottesvillepavilion.com

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