

**Kelley Hayes - guitar**  
**Scooter Ward - vocals/guitar**  
**Jeremy Marshall - bass**  
**Sam McCandless - drums**

After the dawn of Alternative Rock, dozens of bands began focusing their negative energy to create spiteful songs that resonated with crashing guitars and howling, pain-stricken vocals. Depression and frustration became the emotional conditions of the hour, and the music scene became glutted with groups that either feigned despair, or were so bleak they became inextricably tangled in their own gloom.

Today, in an era where angst and volume have become passe, there are still a handful of bands that choose to internalize anguish and regurgitate it as a visceral, deeply moving melody. One of those is Jacksonville, Florida's Cold, but Cold aren't your average self-immolating neo-grunge outfit. While numerous heavy riffing alternative bands wallow in their pain, Cold revel in the dark, celebrating its tense, inviting grip and embracing its all-consuming energy. "I'm happy with the darkness," says frontman Scooter Ward. "I've had a negative outlook for so long. And the way I see stuff has always been bleak, so I've learned to make that good. I don't sit in the dark all the time like Trent Reznor or anything. I just like to write songs that express how I feel. I think the best songs written are the ones about pain and torment."

Cold's self-titled album voices the band's nihilistic outlook with lumbering beats, twisting guitar lines, surging rhythms and rough, raspy vocals. But while the group is certainly in touch with its inner hostility, the members are also aware that beauty and ugliness need to co-exist in order to present a balanced equation. "We're influenced by lots of different stuff, not just heavy music," says Ward. "We like Tool and Black Sabbath, but we also love Radiohead and even Sarah McLachlan. I was really into the Cure and Depeche Mode when I was growing up, and Sam was really into Kiss and Sabbath. Our stuff is just a mixture of all the things we like. There's nothing wrong with melody as long as it's still got emotion in it."

You can accuse Cold of being cynical or negative, but no one could possibly call them shallow or unfeeling. Their debut disc shudders with emotional revelations as cathartic as primal scream therapy. From the disoriented fury of Kelley Hayes' guitar lines to the heartfelt hopelessness of Ward's ravaged howls, Cold is a band that's not afraid to expose its true voice. The first single "Give," which builds from a deep, bobbing groove to a churning wall of despondency, is a rant against the selfish and ungrateful. "It's about giving everything and not getting anything back," says Ward. "It's not specific who it's about. It could be a girl or a corporation or whatever, but it's just about putting your heart and soul into something and getting totally burned. You look back, and can't imagine how people can be like that. But they are."

Other songs on **COLD** are even more grim. "Serial Killer," with its dense, buzzing guitars and frantic beat, is about a boy who seeks revenge on a serial killer who kidnaped him when he was young, and the ominous "Everyone Dies," which echoes with sparse ringing guitars and spacious vocals, is about Martians taking over the earth. "I totally believe in aliens," says Ward.

The roots of Cold go back to the mid '80's, when Ward and drummer Sam McCandless met in high school and started jamming. They formed several garage bands before hooking up with bassist Jeremy Marshall. When they turned 21, the trio moved to Atlanta, where they met guitarist Kelley Hayes, who fleshed out their sound. The band named themselves Grundig, and over the next three years, booked numerous gigs throughout the city. At the time, the group was playing a more metallic style of music that didn't sit well with Ward, so he moved back to Jacksonville in 1996 and started writing songs on his own.

Soon after, he met Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst, who had been a Grundig fan, and the two became fast friends. Durst liked the tunes Ward was toying with, and offered to use his home studio to produce Ward's demo. Durst played producer Ross Robinson the tape, and he immediately offered to produce a full album. "That turned everything around for me," says Ward. "We started playing this music, and I was stoked. I knew things were fixing to happen, and within three months it all clicked."

With a debut album that combines the best aspects of alt-rock, metal and classic rock, and a national tour in the works they're determined to share the wealth. "We're gonna build an upscale studio out here in Jacksonville and make it really killer so lots of local bands can come down and record shit," he says. "We want to make it out in the woods and near a swamp where people can get all crazy. Jacksonville has a lot of bands. It's a very versatile place as far as music goes. There's fuck all else to do, so everyone just forms a band."

So, what's the next goal? MTV's Buzz Bin? Platinum album sales? "Nah," says Ward. "We just want to let everyone hear our music. We want to get out there on tour and just spread the word. In the end, it's not about money or popularity, it's about getting your message across loud and clear."

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