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SWERVEDRIVER

"Chaotic perfection." That's how England's *New Musical Express* describes the sound of **SWERVEDRIVER**—a big, blistering assault that threatens to spiral out of control at any turn. On their A&M debut album **RAISE**, Swervedriver fuse their propulsive energy with a sense of wide open spaces. The results are exhilarating, like the rush that comes from speeding down an empty highway at dusk.

RAISE marks Swervedriver's first full-length release and their U.S. domestic debut. However, the band — Adam Franklin (guitar, vocals), Jimmy Hartridge (guitar), Adi Vynes (bass), and Graham Bonnar (drums) — is already celebrated in its native England. The 1990 EP's **SON OF MUSTANG FORD** and **RAVE DOWN** quickly grabbed the attention of the British press and subsequently sparked the interest of American fanzines and college radio nationwide.

Swervedriver official formed in early 1989. Before that, Adam, Jimmy, and Adi had spent five years immersed in the Stooges/MC5 tradition as members of the Oxford band Shake Appeal. A transformation happened, Jimmy explains, "because we got into modern music for the first time--- Sonic Youth, My Bloody Valentine, Dinosaur Jr." With the addition of Graham, Swervedriver were ready to put their supercharged spin on the guitar/noise genre. The results were riveting. Noted British indie Creation Records signed the group and released its two EP's.

Although British, Swervedriver have a decidedly American feel to both their sound and imagery. "People regard us as a romantic driving band," says Jimmy. "Desperation in the desert in a car that's just about to break down. Jack Kerouac and all that kind of stuff. If you get into the rock 'n' roll that we did, Detroit music, it fits in." The images also capture the thrust of the music. "We're into big, massive soundscapes," continues bassist Adi. "A lot of our songs have a cinematic feel to them. They project a lot of big imagery."

The desire to drive --- and the need to escape --- is central to **RAISE**. In "Son of Mustang Ford," the pounding, insistent rhythm underscores the intensity of Adam's plea: "Mustang Ford, take me far away." Visions of pick-up trucks, radios playing, and road-side signs litter the song. "Sand-blasted" uses soaring guitar lines to convey the feeling of driving along an endless sea. Both "Sunset" and the hypnotic "Lead Me Where You Dare..." suggest a longing to disappear to another place.

Swervedriver didn't create "Rave Down," to slam the Manchester rave up phenomenon. Rather, the band wrote it as a blasting indictment against boredom. "It's about living in a small town and having nothing to do," Adi explains. "It's about being attracted by the lights of the big city, then finding that the city's exactly the same, only on a larger scale."

With **RAISE**, Swervedriver continue to self-produce their releases, a practice begun with the EP's. "We'll possibly use a producer in the future," says Adi. "But this time we just didn't feel it was necessary. We had a very clear idea of what we wanted to do and didn't need any guidance to get out sound." "The songs were pretty well worked out by us before we went into the studio," adds Jimmy.

"We just wanted to keep them that way. It's basically riffs worked out on guitar," Jimmy states. "Then we sit around for hours trying them to different orders and times, and with different

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beats and bass notes, It can be quite a long process.” “When we actually get to the studio, we tend to layer a lot of guitars on it,” says Adi. “Any given Swervedriver song will have something like six or seven guitar lines going at once.” The lyrics, written by guitarist/vocalist Adam, complete the process.

Adam’s vocals are often noticeable for not being upfront. The choice is made deliberately, “It’s different having a laid-back approach on the vocal front. It’s less predictable,” explains Jimmy. “Also, for us the melody’s more important than the actual words --- in that way, the vocals are kind of like an instrument. Still, you can’t get away from the fact that there are words being song, not noise.”

Speaking of words, what exactly does Swervedriver mean? “It doesn’t mean anything,” Jimmy laughs. “But it’s got the word ‘drive’ in it. And the notes swerve around, because sometimes we bend them. The name makes more sense as time goes on.”