

SHOWCASE

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Dee Dee Ramone sees no need to change course

By KARLA TIPTON
Assistant Showcase Editor

The Ramones haven't grown up at all. What's more, they don't show any signs of it — even after 15 years.

On their latest Sire LP *Ramonesmania*, a compilation of the band's most memorable songs, the Ramones' steadfastness to their musical vision of tongue-in-cheek deadpan lyrics and rapid-fire three chord songs becomes immediately apparent.

The band's early career was marked primarily by songs clocking in at under two-and-a-half minutes and sans any guitar solos, virtually unheard of in the mid-'70s.

In concert, all you could usually hear of the lyrics were the song titles, such as "Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment," "Sheena is a Punk Rocker" and "I Wanna Be Sedated."

According to bassist Dee Dee Ramone, the group sees no reason to alter that musical direction on their next album of new material, tentatively to be released next summer.

In recording it, "we're going to take our time," said Dee Dee in

an interview with the Valley Press. "Our goal isn't really to get that slick, commercial sound. What it is is to preserve the Ramones sound."

Now in the midst of a nationwide tour, this raucous punk-ish power pop band will be bringing that sound to the Los Angeles area when they perform at the Hollywood Palladium (July 8), the Celebrity Theater in Anaheim (July 15) and the John Anson Ford Theatre in Hollywood (July 16).

Defined, the Ramones' sound includes strains of '60s pop, beach music — and punk, even though the band's inception predates punk by a good three years. Although often hailed as leaders of that movement, the Ramones could never have been called *hardcore* punkers. As New Yorkers, the members were strongly influenced by early, melodic '60s pop — as well as glitter rockers such as the New York Dolls, Alice Cooper and T-Rex. They never did take rock 'n' roll seriously nor make the extreme anarchist statements that char-

acterized many punk bands.

"Our songs aren't political and more fun," said Dee Dee. "They're more animated-type songs. We've stayed away from the heavy message or shock for the sake of violence."

"Our influences are more like the Beatles and the Beach Boys along with all the glitter groups from the early '70s. So we have a little bit of pop in us."

That pop influence even turns up in the band's moniker. Composed of Johnny, Marky, Joey and Dee Dee Ramone, the members derived their names from an early pseudonym of Paul McCartney, who used to call himself Phil Ramone in the Silver Beatles days.

But however narrowly defined the Ramones sound remains, the members themselves listen to a diversity of music. Dee Dee's current favorites range from reggae artists such as Ziggy Marley to the speed metal groups Metallica and Megadeth to purist street rappers such as Public Enemy.

And although fans shouldn't

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THE RAMONES are celebrating their 15th anniversary with a new compilation album *Ramonesmania* and a nationwide tour that will bring them this month to the Hollywood Palladium, the Celebrity Theatre and the John Anson Ford Theatre. Pictured from left are Johnny, Marky, Joey and Dee Dee Ramone.

Ramone

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expect any rap influences to turn up on the Ramones next record, they can look for a solo rap album from Dee Dee.

Of the material on the album — set for release in September — Dee Dee described it as "not typical rap. It's going to be more rock."

But unlike the street rappers he admires so much, Dee Dee doesn't improvise his lyrics, but painstakingly composes them.

"It's all thought out," he said. "I'm very meticulous about how I write lyrics and I don't use the standard cliches. That's what's starting to turn me off about rap, because everybody's starting to sound like everyone else and the words are pretty lame."

However, Dee Dee's not just writing rap songs. For the next Ramones LP, he's already co-written two songs with Stiv Bators, lead singer of the Dead Boys and the defunct Lords of the New Church.

As for going on the road, the Ramones have given up year-round, non-stop touring, which over the years took its toll. In 1983, Joey and Johnny were both hospitalized for illnesses and drummer Marky left for health reasons. It wasn't until a year ago that Marky was able to re-join the band. Now they're all back together and on the road again, and according to Dee Dee "We're all still in good shape."

As a group, the Ramones are still healthy as well. "It's a happy band," he said.

The release of the new compilation album does inspire speculation of the Ramones' future, and Dee Dee estimates the band will continue to tour for five more years.

Ramonesmania also provides a logical pause for retrospect:

"Listening to the new album, I'm really amazed what good songs we have and what we've accomplished," he said. "I'm glad we're together."