If you can endure the sound of Dinosaur Jr., it’s worth it

By MARK ROMAN

Well, it seems that SST has done it again. The unconventional sounds that come from this California record company have helped to define and legitimize the punk and hardcore music scene on the West Coast, bringing bands such as Black Flag, Sonic Youth, and the Meat Puppets to national attention. The latest work out is from two freshly signed bands, The Screaming Trees and Dinosaur Jr.

Screaming Trees hails from northern Washington, but this is no group of backward mountain men — sixteen sensitivities, hints and touches of the innocence and daggers, but certainly not any part of the psychedelic nostalgia tray of a few years back. This is a quartet of ugly musicians with an up to date sound. Even If and Especially When is the product of modern technology and clean production techniques, all the better to hear the distorted guitar and wall of noise. Great efforts were taken, fortunately, to keep the beckoning sounds of Mark Lanegan’s lead vocals from getting lost. The mix keeps him right up front, where you can actually hear some well-written lyrics.

The first side of Even If opens with those soaring vocals on “Transfiguration.” The real good tracks are “World Painted,” “Girl Behind The Mask,” and “Flying” on the front side; big, big guitar sound, double tracked lead vocals and good touches of reverb. Everything about these songs falls together without going retro rock. Side two gives us “Other Days and Different Planets,” where lead guitarist Gary Lee Conner shows us just how many distorted sounds he can elicit from his little guitar. Comparisons to Iggy Pop and The Stooges are inevitable, and certainly aren’t without merit. The vocals have that peculiar Iggy-esque touch. The rare favor from the album is “In the Forest” which closes out the second side. It’s a decidedly strong finish for a strong album. Screaming Trees is a band destined for the winners. Guitarist J. Mascis and bassist Lou Barlow are responsible for the songwriting here. The last song, “Poledo,” was recorded “by Lou on two crappy tape recorders.” No kidding. Further proof that creative individuals are at work on this album, but someone should keep an eye on young Lou — he might do accidental injury to himself. I guess there’s no real living unless one is on the edge.

The band is touring in support of the new album with The Screaming Trees. On stage, the band draws enough power to dim the lights of several Boston neighborhoods. The onstage equipment list reads like a sonic weapons arsenal. It is rumored that Boston Edison had rotating brownouts during the recent show at Greenstreet Station in Jamaica Plain. Okay, so I made that up. It’s probably still true. Even on record, the recommended listening volume is about 3. Volume was turned up to 11 at the recording studio for your listening enjoyment. Just when Blue Cheer was dead and buried, Dinosaur Jr. comes up with the latest work out. It is rumored that Boston Edison had rotating brownouts during the recent show at Greenstreet Station in Jamaica Plain. Okay, so I made that up. It’s probably still true. Even on record, the recommended listening volume is about 3. Volume was turned up to 11 at the recording studio for your listening enjoyment. Just when Blue Cheer was dead and buried, Dinosaur Jr. comes up with the latest work out.

This tour will make its way back through Boston, and if you’re able to endure the kind of sound that Dinosaur Jr. makes, it will be well worth your time.