



Ed Hamell aka Hamell On Trial - Biography

Hamell on Trial is a one-man punk band—and by punk we mean (mostly) loud, fast music informed by politics, passion, energy and intelligence, played by a guy with a sharp tongue and a wicked sense of humor. His ninth release, a double-disc set titled *Rant & Roll*, launches Hamell into new territory, capturing not only an award-winning, hour-long performance, but the Kerouac-esque story of social commentary through years on the road.

Born in Syracuse, NY, Ed Hamell started many a band before grasping the amazing appeal of autonomy: the solo musician's ability to write a song and perform it the same evening. After freeing himself from the spiritual and financial burdens of a full band, he found himself with a bunch of new songs and a gig at a benefit concert. "I had never played solo before and never really listened to acoustic music," he recalls. "Every musician in town was going to be there, so, knowing that I was going to be scrutinized, and also to differentiate myself from the James Taylors of the world, I decided to call it Hamell on Trial, figuring it would be a one-time deal. After the show, I was offered a record deal from a local label, something I had never come close to in my band years, so even an idiot like me realized I was on to something, and the name stuck."

The Trial eventually adjourned for Albany, NY, where a steady Wednesday night gig at a place called the Half Moon Café drew a whopping 10 to 12 people a week. That lucky few got to witness the musician incorporating elements of comedy, theater, spoken word, and even a cheek-shaking "face solo" or two, as Hamell attempted to further stake a claim for himself far from standard singer-songwriter territory. At the same time, he notes, "I realized that the sonic structure of the acoustic guitar was broader than that of the electric guitar, so I could fill in where the bass and drums would be, all by myself." But it was only after another relocation—this time to Austin, TX—that things started to click, including a regular spot at The Electric Lounge, a showcase at South By Southwest, and a contract with Mercury Records, which ultimately produced two albums (*Big as Life* and *The Chord is Mightier Than the Sword*; highlights of both were later collected as *Mercurioyale*).

Parting ways with both the Lone Star State and his major-label home, Hamell moved to New York in 1997 and started Such-A-Punch Media, on which he self-released his next disc, *Choochtown*, an interconnected collection of songs about drunken, disaffected characters of the sort he'd met while tending bar back in Syracuse. "A lot of them are true stories," he says about his career-long tendency to write about criminals and other shady sorts. "I gravitate to the darker stuff. I've been accused of being misanthropic, but in reality, I hope I affectionately give voice to the disenfranchised, and they're infinitely more fun to write about than Christians or Republicans."

A serious car accident while touring waylaid Hamell on Trial for a year, during which time he started work on a one-man play. Before he could finish it, however, the European success of

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Choochtown encouraged him to tour the continent, and an invitation to open a number of U.S. shows for longtime supporter Ani DiFranco led to a live album, *Ed's Not Dead/Hamell Comes Alive*. 2003 brought his acclaimed Righteous Babe Records debut, *Tough Love*.

Propelled by critical success and his newfound status as a father, Ed conceived his second Righteous Babe Records release *Songs For Parents Who Enjoy Drugs*, a record that somehow managed to be both sweet and apocalyptic. "This isn't one of those Barneyed-out, 'I've got a kid, isn't that precious' kind of albums," Hamell comments. "I'm trying to make the point that us left wingers have to breed. There's too much breeding going on with the right." The album was an exploration of family values that's based in reality, spiked with the hysterically bitter perspective of an undeniably talented daddy-o.

Over the course of 2007, Hamell On Trial began moving in a new direction, focusing on the live performance aspect of his music and developing his live set into an hour-long, one-man theatrical production, titled "The Terrorism Of Everyday Life," that mixed political music with stand-up comedy and social commentary told through stories from his life and travels. He honed the act in between stints on the road, and in August 2007 Ed Hamell traveled to Scotland to take his show to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, one of the oldest festivals for new and outsider performance art. A week of performances ensued, from which Hamell received a slew of outstanding reviews. *Three Weeks* raved, "The man may very well be a genius. Obscene, outrageous and brilliant."

Now on August 26, 2008, Hamell On Trial is ready to release his award-winning act and more in a double-disc set on Righteous Babe Records. Recorded on CD as *The Terrorism of Everyday Life* and captured on DVD as *Rant & Roll*, this deluxe edition proves that Ed Hamell has much more up his sleeve than an extra guitar pick.

Each running an hour, the CD, based upon Hamell On Trial's theatrical show, and the *Rant & Roll* DVD are fast-moving, often-hilarious celebrations of the day-to-day life of a journeyman musician. Equipped with a guitar he strums like a machine gun, a politically astute mind that can't stop moving and a mouth that can be profane one minute and profound the next, Hamell sets his sights on some classic subjects (sex, drugs, rock and roll) and some personal ones, too — his relationship with his father, and Hamell's nearly fatal car crash. *Rant & Roll* mixes live footage from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland (where he received a coveted Herald Award) and at Ani DiFranco's Babeville in Buffalo, NY with on-the-spot interviews, tell-it-like-it-is road footage, DIY animation and Hamell's own cartoons. The film is as unique as the man himself.

For more information on Hamell On Trial, please contact Perry Serpa or Kellyn Slone at 718-261-0174 or perry@goodcoppr.com and kellyn@goodcoppr.com.

Critics rave about "The terrorism of Everyday life"
Edinburgh August 2007

"★★★★★ The man may well be a genius.
Obscene, outrageous and brilliant." - *Three Weeks*

"Hamell On Trial...is about as punk as a Sex Pistols
T-shirt drenched in spit." - *Edinburgh Evening News*

"...street-wise, packed with great one-liners
and righteous in its fury." - *Scotland On Sunday*

"Hamell's razor-sharp wit and brutal honesty
will cut too close to the bone for some people."
- *SkinnyFest*

"★★★★★ Pathos without sentiment and commitment
without compromise. This is a performer at his peak."
- *The Herald*

"Without mawkishness, Hamell carries poignancy
and mirth throughout." - *The Independent*

"If Bill Hicks had ever tried his hand at bile-filled
blues-punk, it might not have sounded too far removed
from [Hamell's song] halfway." - *The Metro*

"An explosive biographical hour...loaded with finely honed
anecdotes punctuated by machine-gun bursts of relevant
songs, Hamell unerringly hits the target." - *The Herald*

"A barbed-wired biography of this 52-year-old New Yorker,
interspersed with hurricane-force rock songs that not only
entertain but add weight to his stories."

- *Edinburgh Evening News*

"A man who has done it all so we don't have to."
- *Scotland On Sunday*

