

BETTER THAN SOMETHING **JAY REATARD**



A Documentary by Alex Hammond and Ian Markiewicz

U.S. Theatrical Release Date: March 2, 2012

Running Time: 89 MIN

Screening Format: HDCAM, Digibeta, Blu-Ray, DVD (16:9, Stereo)

Dates of Production: 2009-2011

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BETTER THAN SOMETHING

JAY REATARD

SYNOPSIS

BETTER THAN SOMETHING is a feature documentary about the controversial and prolific rock musician Jimmy Lee Lindsey Jr, better known as Jay Reatard. This intimate portrait, captured just months before his untimely passing, brings us incredibly close to Jay's complicated punk-rock world in Memphis, Tennessee.

To expand on their short film *WAITING FOR SOMETHING*, filmmakers Alex Hammond and Ian Markiewicz returned to Tennessee to interview his friends, family, and colleagues in the immediate aftermath of Jay's abrupt death. BETTER THAN SOMETHING eloquently interweaves cinéma vérité, interviews, and archival concert performances, and features scenes from an insightful and candid week spent with Jay, who reveals personal childhood stories and the struggles of his life in Memphis.

Tirelessly devoting his entire life to music, Jay Reatard has become a garage rock icon, having created a massive discography spread out over dozens of singles, EPs, and full-length albums, released on labels like Matador, Fat Possum and In The Red. A relentless live performer, Jay toured the world with dozens of bands including Reatards, Lost Sounds, Bad Times, Persuaders, Cheap Time, The Pixies, Spoon, Beck and many more. A devoted - and oftentimes notorious - fixture in his hometown of Memphis, Jay celebrated and continued the city's long-standing history of American music.



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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Producer/Director/Cinematographer/Editor

Alex Hammond – Alexandria Hammond is a Mexican-American filmmaker based in New York City who has dedicated herself to documentary films for the past several years. Her feature documentary debut, *Children of Haiti*, aired on PBS's Independent Lens in January, 2011. Hammond has worked as cinematographer and editor on various projects, such as Albert Maysles' *Close Up: Portraits* (co-editor) and *Dominick Dunne: After the Party* (cinematographer). Her films have screened at various festivals around the world, including The Museum of Modern Art, SilverDocs, Hamptons Film Festival, and Raindance. She recently completed a second feature, *Better than Something: Jay Reatard*, and is currently shooting a new film in Mexico City. Alex is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts.

Writer/Director/Cinematographer/Editor

Ian Markiewicz – Ian Markiewicz is a New York based independent filmmaker. In addition to various freelance projects (such as Random House's *Memorial for Norman Mailer*), he has collaborated with documentary pioneer Albert Maysles as co-director and editor since 2006. Their work, including *The Beales of Grey Gardens* (co-director), *The Rolling Stones: Get Yer Ya Ya's Out! 40th Anniversary* (co-director), ESPN's *30 for 30: Muhammad and Larry* (editor), and *The Love We Make* (co-director), has screened in cinemas, festivals and on television around the world. His feature documentary *Better than Something: Jay Reatard* premiered in 2011, and he is currently in production on a new film in Mexico City. Ian is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

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SELECTED SCREENINGS:

(for a complete list, visit: <http://www.betterthansomething.com/screenings.html>)

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS:

World Premiere:

Nashville Film Festival 2011
Nashville, TN

East Coast Premiere:

AFI-Discovery Channel SilverDOCS Documentary Festival
Silver Springs, MD

Asia Pacific Premiere:

Melbourne International Film Festival
Melbourne, AUSTRALIA

Latin America Premiere:

Santiago International Film Festival
Santiago, CHILE

NYC Premiere:

DOC NYC
New York, NY

THEATRICAL RELEASE DATES:

March 2:

Nitehawk Cinema, NYC
Malco Studio on the Square, Memphis
Grand Illusion Cinema, Seattle
Clinton Street Theater, Portland

March 8:

Egyptian Theatre at the American Cinematheque, Los Angeles

April 11:

Roxie Theater, San Francisco

May 5:

Public Works, Chicago

August 16:

Brotfabrik Kino, Berlin

August 30:

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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JAY REATARD BIOGRAPHY

James Lee Lindsey Jr. (May 1, 1980 – January 13, 2010), better known by the stage name **Jay Reatard**, was an American garage rock musician from Memphis, Tennessee. He released recordings as a solo artist and as a member of Reatards, Lost Sounds, Angry Angels, Terror Visions, Destruction Unit, Nervous Patterns, The Final Solutions, and Bad Times.

Lindsey's recording career began at the age of 15, when his home-made demo tape caught the ear of Eric Friedl, owner of Goner Records and a former member of Oblivians, an early influence on Lindsey, who was enamored with their sloppy, lo-fi music and set forth creating his own brand of heavily distorted garage rock. Friedl was impressed by Lindsey's demos and signed him to his label, later commenting, "I loved the racket so we did the record, and I've been a fan of everything he's done since. He's a pretty amazing kid."

Lindsey named his first project the **Reatards**, and adopted an Oblivians-influenced surname calling himself Jay Reatard. The Reatards' first release on Goner was a 7" EP called *Get Real Stupid*, which featured Lindsey as a solo performer alternating between singing, playing guitar, and beating on a bucket to provide a percussive rhythm. Around this time, Greg Cartwright, another member of The Oblivians, played drums live at gigs and recorded with Lindsey on his first (self-released) cassette, *Fuck Elvis, Here's The Retards*, which featured recording assistance from Jack Yarber, yet another Oblivian. For Lindsey's second vinyl release he recruited a backing band, hiring bassist Steve Albundy and drummer Elvis Wong to accompany him. The Reatards' first LP as a trio was 1998's *Teenage Hate*, followed by a second LP, *Grown Up Fucked Up*, and a number of singles. The Reatards' first European tour came in 1998, when Lindsey was just 18.

In 2001 Lindsey began recording music with Alicja Trout and Rich Crook as the **Lost Sounds**, a side project that would ultimately usurp the Reatards as Lindsey's primary musical venture. With alternating male and female vocals, and prominently featured synthesizers, the Lost Sounds were a departure from the guitar-driven garage rock of the Reatards. Lindsey once claimed that his time in the Lost Sounds "was and is more fun than anything else I have ever done." Yet despite Lindsey's enthusiasm for the band, the Lost Sounds bitterly broke up in 2005.

Lindsey was a prolific songwriter, often acting as a member and contributing compositions to two or more bands concurrently. One of Lindsey's first side projects was the **Bad Times**, a one-off band that included Eric Friedl and King Louie Bankston. The band recorded an album's worth of material after only one practice session in 1998, releasing a self-titled LP in 2001. After only one live performance, the band disbanded, each member returning to his respective solo commitments.

In 2004, Lindsey, together with his ex-girlfriend Alix Brown of Atlanta-based rock band the Lids, formed Shattered Records, an independent record label that released mainly limited edition vinyl. Shattered Records released records for a number of lo-fi punk and rock bands, including: Kajun SS, Jack Oblivian, Tokyo Electron, Reatards, Final Solutions, Terror Visions, Angry Angels, Carbonas, Rat Traps, Digital Leather, and the Knaughty Knights.

Out of this partnership with Brown came another musical endeavor for Lindsey, **Angry Angles**. Alternating between drummers Paul Artigues from Die Rotzz and Ryan 'Elvis Wong' Rousseau from Tokyo Electron, the band began touring the U.S. in the fall of 2006. Before the band had even released its second single, Lindsey and Brown began a short European tour. Angry Angles disbanded after releasing a number of vinyl singles.

By 2005, both the Reatards and the Lost Sounds had broken up, and Lindsey focused his attention on a handful of side projects, working with and releasing material as **Terror Visions** and **Destruction Unit**. After he began focusing on his solo career in 2006, however, Lindsey said he had no desire to reform his previous bands. "I'd just feel like I was going backwards if I worked on anything else," Lindsey said.

2006 saw the release of *Blood Visions* (In the Red), Lindsey's first solo album under the moniker Jay Reatard. After a lengthy tour supporting *Blood Visions*, he signed a multi-album, exclusive deal with the New York-based indie label Matador Records (A number of major labels like Universal Records, Columbia Records, and Vice Records along with independent label Fat Possum wanted to meet with him in the hopes of signing him). Reatard chose Matador because he felt they were "the only ones keeping any of the promises they'd made along the way." He released six limited 7" singles throughout 2008 with Matador. Soon after the release of the first single and reviews in *NME*, *Spin Magazine*, and *Rolling Stone*, Lindsey began playing larger shows and various music festivals all over the world. In October 2008, Reatard's *Matador Singles '08* compiled all six of the singles on one LP/CD, and Lindsey again hit the road with a second, more extensive tour to support the album. These songs sound drastically different from his early punk records, and Lindsey said that critics often misinterpreted the newer sound. "I just think it's noisy pop music," Lindsey said.

Lindsey's final album, *Watch Me Fall* (his first proper studio album with Matador), was released in August 2009. He described this collection of songs as more melodic and twee-inspired. In a 2009 interview, Lindsey said "these new batch of songs feature organ, some mandolins, a cello, a lot more back-ups and harmonies." He noted that he's "become a little bit more about the melodies... I think I stripped away a layer of the fuzz; I might have been challenging people before to find them and this time I might be making them a little bit more obvious."

While *Watch Me Fall* is sweeter than his previous works, Lindsey's live shows remained fiercely energetic. "I just want it to be like an assault live, and softer on records," he said. In an August 2009 interview with Turn it Down Interviews, Lindsey said the album's lyrics are centered around his growing fear of death and the betrayal of close friends.

Lindsey was found dead in his home in the Cooper-Young neighborhood of Midtown, Memphis, around 3:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 13, 2010. Lindsey was 29 years old. A statement was posted on the website of Goner Records that Reatard had died in his sleep. Friends of Lindsey stated that he had recently complained of flu-like symptoms. An autopsy was performed by the Shelby County medical examiner, and Memphis' *Commercial Appeal* reported on February 3 that Lindsey had died of "cocaine toxicity, and that alcohol was a contributing factor in his death."

A memorial was held for Lindsey on Saturday, January 16 in Memphis at Memorial Park Funeral Home. Eric Friedl and bandmate Stephen Pope were those that eulogized Lindsey. One of Lindsey's trademark white Gibson Flying V guitars hung behind his coffin at the funeral home; he was buried with the guitar the next day. His grave is near that of Memphis soul musician Isaac Hayes.

Re-issues and posthumous releases of Lindsey's recordings are in the works, including those with The Reatards and The Lost Sounds. At the time of his death, Lindsey had been working on at least six songs for a new solo album for Matador Records.

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PRESS

THE L MAGAZINE / JEFF KLINGMAN

<http://www.thelmagazine.com/newyork/better-to-burn-out/Content?oid=2216031>

Better To Burn Out?

By Jeff Klingman on February 29, 2012

Starting production as a classic rock documentary and ending up as an obituary, *Better Than Something: Jay Reatard* presents a sad, compelling picture of a guy unsuited to anything but punk immortality. Jay Reatard was uniquely driven to record pop-inflected punk rock, to the exclusion of school attendance or a normal adolescence. If Alex Hammond and Ian Markiewicz's film cements any one notion about a deceptively complicated guy, it's that one. Short on dynamic visuals, the film comes alive with old video of Reatard's multiple bands. He's a contentious wild man from age 15, a menacing brute thereafter. As his star rises and the stages grow, he seems more and more out of place. Although we know the ending already, it's hard to imagine its alternate. Especially vital is footage of Reatard's pre-fame bands Lost Sounds and Angry Angles, who previously existed for his Matador-era fans only on 7" sleeves or posthumous lists of his many projects. Early oos group Lost Sounds seem particularly promising here, at least until the footage of Jay tossing multiple chairs at keyboardist Alicja Trout while she asks someone in the audience to give him a hug.

Again and again, the film makes clear that Jay was a world-class bridge burner, someone easy to go get a beer with, but incredibly difficult to have as a long-term bandmate. At a critical glance his constant project-shifting and eventual solo work seemed like prickly eccentricity giving way to a more focused vision. The film makes clear that it's the only way it could have gone. Despite obvious social difficulty, his easy charm in interview segments complicates that picture. Listening to him talk about getting an obscure band education from Kurt Cobain's copious interview namedrops is wildly relatable for just pre-internet types. He's the sort of jerk many of us have known and befriended.

Even more illuminating is the glimpse given into Reatard's upbringing in low-income Memphis neighborhoods. The commonly assumed indie-rock backstory of suburban privilege bears little relation to his. While he presents it with mostly good cheer—character built, song-writing material mined—there are legitimately shocking details here, hints that his story could have ended unhappily in myriad ways even without the availability of rock n' roll excess. The filmmakers' handling of the self-destructive tendencies that led to his death is tasteful. The issue isn't dodged, but the time devoted to it is relatively brief.

It's clear that this wasn't the film Hammond and Markiewicz set out to make, though. There is a bit of an awkward tonal shift between the warts-and-all portrait of Jay Reatard's life as it was happening, and the talking head eulogizing that became a sad, necessary inclusion. Unrealized aspirations take on more tragic weight, of course. We won't get a Jay Reatard album in which he plays the cello, or a country record under his given name Jimmy Lee Lindsey, Jr. But what we got, what's captured here, is a damn sight better than better than nothing.

VILLAGE VOICE / MARK HOLCOMB

<http://www.villagevoice.com/2012-02-29/film/better-than-something-jay-reatard-film-review/>

Better Than Something: Jay Reatard

By Mark Holcomb on February 29, 2012

Like the longhair with the foghorn falsetto it's titled after, this unfussy rock-doc profile is shaggy, sophisticated, and more than a little sad. Compiled from dozens of hours of 2009 interview footage with Memphis indie-punk icon Jay Reatard (né Jimmy Lee Lindsey Jr.), *Better Than Something* captures its subject at a crossroads: pushing 30 and losing the adrenalized rage that gave his early work (and stage name) its nasty edge. Reatard is candid and cogent about his future as an artist—all the more tragic, then, that he OD'd in 2010. Directors Alex Hammond and Ian Markiewicz make a case that Reatard's accidental death came as much from his openness and inclination to push boundaries as from the demons nipping at his ass, a subject they broach with grace rather than milk for sticky details. *Better Than Something* is most alive when it shadows Reatard at record-store gigs, restaurants, and hanging out on his front porch. The obligatory interviews with fellow musicians and label execs provide context, but only those with Reatard's stoic, stricken dad and adoring younger sister rise above standard scene-setting. Even non-fans will appreciate what a tough act Reatard is to follow, though, and anybody with a shred of respect left for rock 'n' roll will feel loss and anger at his passing.

VARIETY / EDDIE COCKRELL

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117945610?refcatid=31>

Better Than Something: Jay Reatard

By Eddie Cockrell on July 6, 2011

Another bittersweet tale of a talented musician gone too soon, "Better Than Something: Jay Reatard" offers an uncommonly intimate portrait of the prolific garage-punk phenom who died of a drug/alcohol cocktail in 2010, just shy of his 30th birthday. What elevates the pic above the norm is a series of remarkably candid and eerily prescient interviews conducted by helmers Ian Markiewicz and Alex Hammond, who soft-pedal the circumstances of his abrupt demise but otherwise provide a thorough overview of the Memphis scene and Reatard's prominent place therein. A must for fans, pic is a natural for fests and ancillary sales.

The natural-born musician, whose given name was Jimmy Lee Lindsay Jr., dropped out of school at 15 to concentrate on making music. After a voluminous series of limited-edition vinyl singles and lengthy touring stints fronting bands with names like the Retards, Lost Sounds and the Final Solutions, in 2006 he released his first solo LP, "Blood Visions," under his unorthodox, self-deprecating stage name.

By 2008 he'd signed with Matador Records, which compiled the 45s he released that year on a single disc. His final album, "Watch Me Fall," was released in August 2009.

Clearly a smart and articulate guy, Reatard comes across as a confident, driven perfectionist who inevitably inspired both fierce loyalty and lasting enmity. Performance footage from numerous international venues large and small reveal a charismatic performer with a distinctively melodic sound that combines the fury of punk with the catchiness of pop.

Helmets are thorough in their research, interviewing family members, band mates and industry types to demonstrate Reatard's polarizing personality and sturdy legacy. Most poignant is the pic's subject himself, who at one point muses, "I'm not going to be able to make records when I'm dead. I'm not dead right now, so I want to make records. It's that simple, really." And in the world of Jimmy Lee Lindsay Jr., it was. Tech package is agreeably grungy as befits the musical aesthetic, with generous helpings of Reatard's music that include previously unreleased and alternate versions of his songs.

THE A.V. CLUB / NOEL MURRAY

<http://www.avclub.com/articles/better-than-something-jay-reatard.70157/>

Better Than Something: Jay Reatard

By Noel Murray on March 1, 2012

Jimmy Lee Lindsey Jr. died four months shy of his 30th birthday, but packed a shitload of living into a short time on Earth. If he wasn't playing a show, the man who dubbed himself "Jay Reatard" was practicing or recording with one of the dozen or so bands or solo projects he launched between age 14 and 29. Under the names The Reatards, Lost Sounds, The Final Solutions, Nervous Patterns, Angry Angles, Destruction Unit, and more, Lindsey released scores of singles and albums—some on vinyl, some on CD, and some on handmade cassettes. According to friends, he almost never wrote anything down; he kept songs, schedules, and venues in his head, and given his volatile temper and propensity for substance abuse, that made the whole Jay Reatard enterprise unpredictable. But over his last few years in particular, the songs Lindsey released as Jay Reatard were astonishingly accomplished, merging punk, garage, and new wave in ways that put him at the vanguard of the new power-pop movement.

It was because of Jay Reatard's burgeoning importance—and the growing body of anecdotes about his onstage antics and offstage anger—that filmmakers Alex Hammond and Ian Markiewicz were hired to make the short promotional documentary "Waiting For Something" in 2009. They've now expanded that short into the feature-length *Better Than Something: Jay Reatard*, which tries to put Lindsey's many contradictions into context. The footage of Jay Reatard from radio interviews, concerts, and in-store appearances reveals an angry man, always on the defensive, but in their personal conversations with Lindsey, Hammond and Markiewicz captured a much mellower dude, willing to talk openly about growing up in poverty and coming of age in the Memphis punk scene. That same split persists in *Better Than Something's* recent interviews, in which friends, fans, family members, and bandmates describe an artist who was inspiring in his creative drive, sweet in private moments, yet still extraordinarily difficult to be around sometimes.

Better Than Something doesn't really try to resolve the mystery of how someone could be simultaneously so productive and destructive. (Where did he find the time?) But given how briefly Jay Reatard was in the public eye, it's a thrill to see so much performance footage in *Better Than Something*, as well as to hear multiple perspectives on some of the most legendary Reatard antics: ripping down disco balls at punk clubs, biting the head off a pigeon, et cetera. And Lindsey himself offers a lot of insight into why he did some of what he did, citing how frustrating it could be to entrust his musical vision to faulty technology and unreliable bandmates, and confessing that some of his drug binges were his way of destroying his life so he could rebuild from scratch. One of the friends who defends Lindsey's violent rages shrugs, "Everybody deserves to have their fuckin' ass beat, at least twice." The glory and tragedy of Jay Reatard was that he directed those righteous beat-downs at himself as much as at others.

SPIN ARTICLE / ANDREW EARLES

<http://www.spin.com/articles/jay-reatard-remembered>

Jay Reatard Remembered

By Andrew Earles on January 28, 2010

Memphis, Tennessee, can be reliably fruitful for those who have chosen particular fields. Lawyers and advertising execs do well here, as do commercial real estate developers and the proprietors of catering businesses, liquor stores, and landscaping companies. Memphis can also be perfectly rewarding for the creatively-inclined, though a certain percentage of musicians, artists, or writers can always be counted on to split, generally before reaching the goal of self-sustenance, convinced of another city's ability to speed the process. And finally, Memphis seems oddly hospitable to motormouths favoring pie-in-the-sky talk over any degree of noticeable creative progress. At the end of the day, however, Memphis is what you make it.

Jay Lindsey, better known to the world as Jay Reatard, was perpetually in the position to move from Memphis, but it was something he only entertained once (Atlanta), for a short time. He knew this town informed his creativity through the positive and the negative. Most everyone leaves for what they perceive as more culturally fertile, beneficial pastures, and sometimes they can't be blamed, but it's far more admirable to make a name for yourself, then use your newfound resources to help your local scene produce more notable exports. Williamsburg, Portland, Austin—they don't need help. Memphis needs help.

Perhaps as early as age 14 (shortly after his last flirtations with school, where other kids tormented him with the slur he'd later adopt as his surname), Jay Lindsey started facing down the major adversity around him. He got out of the shitty Memphis neighborhoods, catching rides to Shangri-La Records, walking around the store in silence and ever-so-carefully choosing a seven-inch or a zine to take back as his artifacts from a world he was determined to first be accepted by...then rule. I worked most Sundays at said store, and my co-worker/boss Andria Lisle had told me about this kid, couldn't be over 15, that came in sort of excited and asked about the local band he'd seen open for Rocket from the Crypt that he said "sucked." She sold him one of the early Oblivians seven-inches; by the time he showed up on one of my Sundays, there was talk of him exchanging letters with an Oblivian member or two. He made no attempt to hide the automatic discontent at seeing a new face, yet he loosened up a bit when it was apparent I wasn't an asshole with snotty taste or an extremely talkative type. The funny thing is, I could be both of those things, but I remembered when I walked through the same store, a year or two older than this kid, knowing not one person who liked what I liked and overwhelmed by a new universe of music to be fanatical about.

It seems like a blur now, but it started with one seven-inch in the mid-'90s. Then came album after album, and then the tours. This kid wasn't old enough to smoke and he was touring. It always impressed me that Jay knew, at such a young age, that he had to make a name for himself outside of the Memphis city limits, and that this act would be an immensely satisfying way to erect his middle fingers at the terminally provincial indie rockers who considered themselves of great artistic importance because they drew 100 locals to a Saturday night show. Memphis finally caught up, and eventually tried to crawl straight up his ass, but he didn't leave. His loyalty to this town was not a desire to be the big-fish-in-a-small-pond—though hardly a torturous situation for anyone—as it wasn't long before Jay could be a big fish in big ponds. He responded by purchasing a place in his neighborhood of ten years, then moving a close creative partner and friend into the house so they could work on building a studio.

Jay Reatard's discography is a daunting proposition; if this purely-wrong thing had not happened, it would always be a work-in-progress by an unapologetic maximalist building a unique and influential empire with the utmost care. It's a larger body of work than what can be claimed by most famous musicians over the age of 60. These were "Memphis records" just like his initial mentors, the Oblivians, made "Memphis records" and Jon Spencer's idol Jeffrey Evens makes "Memphis records." Once during an interview, I asked the question I always asked: "Do you plan to stay here?" It was in the spring of 2008, his answer was a question with a question. He asked if I could imagine him doing what he does – the labels and the producing and the music – in any other city.

On Wednesday, January 14, Memphis suffered a loss that will resonate unlike any of our seemingly numerous and similar losses. As morning moved into early afternoon, a quiet chaos spread from the Midtown neighborhood to the rest of the nation. It was a confusing mixture of very bad, very real news followed by impossible questions and misinformation.

Three days later, upwards of 300 mourners attended Jay Lindsey's visitation and eulogy service, and as I walked into the medium-sized auditorium at Memphis' Memorial Gardens Funeral Home, I fancied myself mentally fortified in case certain fears became a reality. Over the previous two days, I slowly created this nebulous bogeyman out of certain sentiments flooding the Internet. I took drives, alone, practicing the cinematic slice 'n' dices I would verbally deliver if a scene erupted via the obtrusive gawkers, attention-seekers, or anyone attending behind brazenly dubious motives.

That it never did speak volumes about who was touched and what was accomplished by Jay Lindsey in his brutally short time on Earth. It also speaks to the inherent goodness that people do still have. The grief was palpable, contagious, uncontrollable, and genuine. It moved backwards through the room, slowly carried by those upon whom Lindsey's open casket had leveled a visceral impact. Knees were visibly weak. Social animals – those always flanked by friends no matter where they are – found individual spots at the ends of pews where composure could be lost in a semi-private fashion.

It would be impossible to saturate the online universe with too many clearheaded, heartfelt, respectful and accurate statements about this unique and genuinely special personality. Jay was, at his core and frequently, the Real Deal. He was a topical updating of rugged individualism, something so rare in an era when people copy the musical favorites of seemingly cooler people then paste them into their own Facebook profile.

One of the scariest trappings of fame is questioning the motive(s) behind each and every unsolicited attempt at friendship. Even more disturbing is the possibility that an existing friendship might become dubious. This is symptomatic of fame on any level and especially rampant when one's visibility is heightened by a mid-sized city's small scene. Some of Jay's older friends had become distanced colleagues over time, or married and domesticated, or residents of another city. Some were pushed away by the scene and biz static that followed Jay over the past two years. Some were pushed away by Jay himself, but these issues didn't exist Saturday afternoon. This is what Jay would have wanted. Well, he would have wanted the Flying V to be mounted above the open casket like that, too. And not to symbolize a crucifix.

When people don't understand something, the immediate impulse is to dislike rather than to consider and process, and this is not limited to the shortsighted or jealous. I recently became aware that an amateur comedian peppered his act with tasteless, hateful, and misinformed humor about Jay, and more than likely, Jay's passing. It's healthy to ignore this sort of thing and concentrate on positive memories or somehow find the bright side of a future with only Jay's legacy to substitute for the authentic, breathing, screaming, and fighting real thing. But easier said than done. I wish more people could have seen Jay's mother deciding at the last minute to say something to all of these strangers, shooting her arm out from a half-concealed side pew with a loud, "Wait a minute!" I cannot properly translate the intensity of hearing this woman come to conclusions and put things together in her mind, in real time, as if she were diffusing the pressure of grief to one family member during the drive home. It was not unrealistic or delusional when she ended with something she perhaps hadn't considered until that very moment: "My son was a legend in his time."

I want to remember the tone of Eric Friedl's voice as the founder of Goner Records delivered his eulogy, and I want to remember that I heard something in it I'd never heard during the almost 15 years I've known him: Pain and confusion. It's impossible to understand just how devastating it was to hear Eric disrupt his flow of poignant memories with, "This...this wasn't supposed to happen." I want to remember the words as I heard them.

My relationship with Jay was a simple one, a casual friendship borne of a semi-professional dynamic, but it carried the potential for misunderstanding and brevity. I wrote quite a bit of copy related to Jay Reatard, spread fairly evenly across the past 12 years. All, or at least the majority of these reviews, interviews, promo one-sheets and bios are the result of regional proximity, hunger for work, pride and support of local music of a certain quality rather than simply local music of a local quality.

Jay and I exchanged not one cross word during those 12 years, and I must have screwed up a date or wrote something he found to be corny or unneeded. It doesn't matter. It matters that Memphis is injured and sad, and that we miss Jay Lindsey so much. Those first couple of days, I knew it was going to be bad. This...this is something else.