

Chris Robinson is the proud possessor of one of the best smirks in the rock world. Maybe he doesn't know he's doing it, but when he talks in that sweet Southern drawl and comes out with a statement that he knows is funny, outrageous or just downright

interesting, his mouth curls up in a real "know it all" kind-of-grin. But then confidence has never been a problem for the vocalist of the Black Crowes. Even before his band hit the big time last year with their multi-platinum debut LP, **Shake Your Money Maker**, Chris (who along with his guitar playing brother

that have a connection with our audience, and play 'em with a lot of feeling."

# The Black Crowes

Certainly on **Southern Harmony and Musical Companion** the Black Crowes have continued in the same rich musical vein that first won them acclaim. Mixing blues passion, rock energy and soul flavorings, the band has created another stirring instrumental brew that marks them as the lineal descendants of such

"I did say that not all of us would make it through our first album and tour, and I guess I was right," he said in regard to Cease's departure. "It's a tough life out there and some of us are better equipped to deal with it than others. It's really that simple.

As far as the drug issue and the corporate sponsorship questions, I think I've covered those to death by now. It's just a question of not being hypocritical. This time we're gonna go out on our own tour and do things the way we think they should be done. If people like it, that's great."

## THE MOUTHS OF THE SOUTH

Atlanta Rockers Return With **Southern Harmony and Musical Companion**.

BY BRYAN HARDING

Rich, bassist Johnny Colt, new guitarist Mark Ford and drummer Steve Gorman (the Crowes) was fond of rockin' to the beat of his own drummer. This is a guy who was never much of a conformist, and once his group's success provided him with an international forum for expressing his views, his outspoken opinions on drugs, corporate sponsorship and other assorted rock and roll maladies made headlines from New York to New Zealand.

Now with the release of the band's eagerly anticipated second album, **Southern Harmony and Musical Companion**, many within the music community are anxious to discover if Robinson is going to tone down his act—or if he's gonna put some extra spit 'n polish on his reputation as one of rock's most outspoken figures. If first impressions are anything to go by, it seems that this time around Robinson wants to use his ever-growing fame to promote some causes he believes in, and perhaps even more importantly, promote rock and roll itself.

"We never had particularly high aspirations when we started out," he said. "All this attention was kind of unexpected and it still is. It was only a couple of years ago that the main goal I had was to sell out clubs back home in Atlanta and avoid having to work a day job. But Rich and I had a goal that we started on the first album and continued on this one, and that was to write the best rock and roll songs we could. More than anything else that's what is important to us. We never believed that a lot of the songs that kids were hearing on the radio were really that relevant to them and what they were experiencing. That's one of the things we want to do—write songs

classic rock acts as Aerosmith and The Rolling Stones. And while Robinson is only too quick to acknowledge the band's influences, and tip his hat to them, he also wants it to be known that the Black Crowes know more than just rock and roll. This is a band whose musical roots stretch deep and far.

"I've always had very eclectic musical tastes," he said. "I grew up in a musical family where my father was a folk singer, and we were always exposed to all sorts of music. At any time of the day or night you might hear folk music, soul, blues or some jazz from Thelonious Monk. But I don't deny that when I first heard the Rolling Stones it really affected me. I don't know if it was the passion they were playing with or what, but there was something about what they were doing that just hit me. I could relate to what they seemed to be going through. They were putting everything they had into every note they played and sang. I guess that's what we've always tried to do, and on this album we're probably getting a little better at it."

Still, despite the purity of their rock and roll approach, and the sincere impression that these guys truly are in it out of pure love for music, the Black Crowes can't seem to keep themselves out of trouble. Sure, the Stones have always been pretty good at keeping their names in the papers too, but somehow you get the impression that if Robinson had his druthers, he'd rather have people talk just about his music rather than his pro-drug proclamations, his well-publicized tirades against corporate sponsorship in rock and roll, or the recent problems the band had with departed guitarist Jeff Cease (now a member of Black Eyed Susan).

While Robinson was adverse to discussing road details, from what we were able to gather it appears that the Crowes' *High As The Moon* tour will begin in mid-Summer and continue right through the end of the year. The band will headline their own theatre package, and utilize a variety of ethnic musicians (possibly from Afghanistan) to play music live on stage from the minute the doors open to the time the band hits the stage. Of course, forces within the rock industry will probably try to convince the band that such a move is foolish and "commercial suicide" at a time when it's generally believed a two-act bill is needed to fill even a theatre-sized venue. But the Black Crowes have never been a band to listen to industry pundits, and it sure as hell doesn't seem like they're about to change their tune now.

"We're just a little band from Atlanta, Georgia, that went and made a couple of records, went on the road, experienced a lot of new things and tried to grow up," Robinson said. "Sure, we hear people talk about us, both good and bad, and we try to ignore most of it. We're doing something that we really believe in. That's what makes us feel good. It's real nice to play music that you believe in your heart and then have a lot of people accept it. That tells us one thing—to just listen to ourselves and keep on believing."

"This tour should be a lot of fun," he added. "Yeah, we do have some little things planned that are gonna be very different. But I think they're in keeping with our beliefs. Again, we don't go for hypocrisy. You can love us or not, but hopefully you appreciate the fact that we're sincere about all this."