

# Mp3 At The Spine - The Curriculum Is Never Neutral



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A mixture of indie rock and punk rock. Reviewers have drawn comparisons to Fugazi, Built to Spill, Neil Young, Pixies, Husker Du, Guided by Voices, etc. 13 MP3 Songs ROCK: Americana, POP: Power Pop  
Details: CD REVIEW: "This is honestly one of the best records, front to back that I've heard all year." (Ari Joffe, Punk Planet Magazine, Chicago, IL Issue 59, Jan/Feb 2004). THIS WEEK'S PICKS/WHAT'S WHERE "At the Spine basically is multi-instrumentalist Mike Toschi, who sounds blissfully impervious to whatever fad his indie-rock peers are currently into. Even after a few listens, The Curriculum is Never Neutral (Global Seepej) keeps on revealing quirky new hooks, new layers." (Time Out NY, Issue No. 405 July 3-10, 2003). AT THE SPINE "At the Spine's great... debut... barely hints at their live power: The band exults madly all over the room with a performance to banish all jadedness. This band is so strong and fresh that watching them, I can't help but imagine..." (The Stranger, UP COMING, Seattle, WA. July 31-Aug 6th, 2003) --- at the spine is the new project lead by the singing, songwriting and instrumentation of mike toshi (tos-key). at the spine's "the curriculum is never neutral" is a collection of rock, punk and folk-rock anthems crafted from the landscape of america. the bronx, richmond, portland, seattle and the gulf of mexico. working the five a.m. freight shift at the grocery store. cross-coastal relationships gone sour. band mates stabbing each other in the back. life in cocaine alley at 151st and broadway in washington heights. teaching seventh grade in the south bronx at one of the most violent schools in nyc. escaping one weekend to a wood stove heated house in the hills of vermont. sprawl and gentrification. memories. realities. the subtle victories amidst the constant of the industries. resisting where you can, but also reluctantly having to swallow it all down with sand in your teeth. the album was recorded at el vecino de los muertos studio in seattle, wa by mike toshi. it was mixed and mastered by eric oz at iron orange studio. eric is an engineer at glenn sound in seattle, wa, that has recorded live sessions with the white

stripes, Elliott Smith, Built to Spill, Sebadoh, etc. Aaron Smer from The Plains played drums on this recording. Live this band plays as an energetic and entertaining power-trio, featuring Aaron Smer on drums and Lucas Oswalt on bass. Mike Toschi is the ex-lead guitarist for The Plains and guitar player for Portland-based folk rockers Bit Part. In 2000 he released a solo album and previous to that he played in the Portland power trio, The Help. He works as a teacher, laborer, for various nonprofits and as a temp to survive. He also runs Global Seepej Records. MORE PRESS FOR AT THE SPINE-----

CD REVIEW: At the Spine, The Curriculum is Never Neutral. At the Spine leader Mike Toschi is an accomplished proletariat singer-songwriter... . Toschi, who plays all the instruments on the album (except for drums...) writes music that is heavy without being overly aggressive or loud. This is definitely an autumn record: solemn, sober, but not depressing. It's refreshing to hear a band that doesn't have to rely on straight 4/4 tempos to get their point across. Hard folk tunes played in 6/8 time like "Cutter" and "Mott Haven" are just as effective as groovy rockers like "Crystal Clear". The production, also done by Toschi, is on point all the time. His songwriting is strong enough that these tunes would probably work with just his clear clean vocals and an acoustic guitar, but Toschi knows exactly the right studio tricks to beef 'em up without stepping all over the basic song. He doubles up the vocal tracks, makes the right electric guitar vs. acoustic choices and doesn't extend the songs beyond their necessary length. This is honestly one of the best records, front to back that I've heard all year. (Ari Joffe, Punk Planet Magazine, Chicago, IL Issue 59, Jan/Feb 2004). AT THE SPINE (Mars Bar/Cafe Venus) Political music is tricky, and miraculous when a band consistently makes it beautiful. At the Spine reminds the listener of the Minutemen: This trio comes on personal even as they try to light a candle against this new dark era. While D. Boon and co. sprang from jazz, At the Spine's subtle, classic protest songs spill from an adolescence steeped in '80s metal--which means this music is quite unlike anything you've ever heard. Imagine Pete Seeger fronting Iron Maiden with a young Mike Watt, and you get the idea. At the Spine's great, homemade debut, The Curriculum Is Never Neutral, barely hints at their live power: The band exults madly all over the room with a performance to banish all jadedness. This band is so strong and fresh that watching them, I can't help but imagine... (Grant Cogswell, The Stranger, UP COMING, Seattle, WA. July 31-Aug 6th, 2003) Friday, June 13: AT THE SPINE at MOOTSY'S Lead by the straightforward storytelling of frontman Mike Toschi, the Seattle trio At The Spine displays a rangy meld of lo-fi rock songs that skirt along the backbone of indie rock, punk, folk and occasionally jazz. There's something eerily familiar about At the Spine's recent

release *The Curriculum is Never Neutral*-reminiscent of the quirkiness of early 90's *Guided By Voices* and *Pavement*. And in a time when bland, fast-food radio formats tout familiar new music and retro hits, *At the Spine* create familiar retro hints that make for exciting new hits. What a novel concept!!! Thursday and Friday at Mootsy's. 9:30 p.m. (Jeremy Hadley, *The Local Planet Weekly*, Spokane, WA) **AT THE SPINE, THE CURRICULUM IS NEVER NEUTRAL** (Global Seepej). At the Spine remember those final, fading days when vinyl was king and album spines could be counted on as the ace organizational tool in your music library. So mastermind and former Plains guitarist Mike Toschi indulges a love of AOR Ozzy vocalizing, via early-'90s grunge, on *The Curriculum Is Never Neutral's* dozen or so hearty tracks, a mixed bag that reflects Toschi's varied life experience as an educator, a laborer, a temp, and a recording engineer. Boasting an interest in the American landscape, *Curriculum* ranges widely - from tunes with an undeniably anthemic bent, as with the rousing opener, "Second Hand,"... try as he might, this slacker can't disguise the elemental vitality underlying these songs; word has it that live, Toschi's power trio might even make you break out... At the Spine play Sat/19, Stork Club, Oakl. (510) 444-6174. Sun/20, Rooster's Roadhouse, Alameda. (510) 337-9190. Mon/21, Kimo's, S.F. (415) 885-4535.(Kimberly Chun, *Grooves*, San Francisco Bay Guardian, July 16, 2003) **AT THE SPINE, BERNIE'S, SUNDAY JUNE 29**. Contrary to the name, *At the Spine* is not the latest death metal phenom from Sweden nor a commune of hippie-psych purveyors looking to tap into the outer realms. Instead it's the guise behind which Mike Toschi soundtracks his wild tales about an average middle-class American existence. *The Curriculum is Never Neutral* (Global Seepej) is a sleek home-recorded travelogue of Toschi's experiences moving from city to city that's as varied musically as the landscapes that sculpt the songs. There's the spirited punk drive of Hsker D on "Cutter," which chronicles Toschi's stint unloading freight for a grocery store, and the warped folk of "Slipping," which resembles a poor man's Neutral Milk Hotel. Best of all is "Mott Haven," a classic-styled anthem in the vein of Cheap Trick telling the story of Toschi's... life as Bronx schoolteacher... (Kevin Elliott, *Columbus Alive/Weekly*, Columbus, OH). Music: This Week's **SHORT TAKES: At the Spine ROCK**. The band's instrumentation is clear and tight, resembling folk rock with a sharper edge. The overall sound is pleasant... Definitely original. See them, definitely. (Frank De Blase, *City: Greater Rochester's alternative newsweekly*, June 25-July 1, 2003). **INDIE ROSCKERS AT THE SPINE AT THE ZEBRA JUNE 14th**. ... At the Spine is a new project for singer songwriter Mike Toschi (Toskey) ...[live and touring with drummer Adam Drew and bassist Morgan Patton]. At The Spine is

touring in support of their latest release *The Curriculum is Never Neutral*. *The Curriculum...* is a collection of rock, punk, and folk rock anthems crafted from the landscapes of America laced with adrenaline. At The Spines musical styles range from Fugazi to an early Neil Young and all points in between. ...head down to the Zebra enjoy a cocktail and get ready to rock. (The Bozone, Entertainment and Events Calendar, Bozeman, Montana). THE BANDS: AT THE SPINE ...Their music leads you on and then tastefully slaps you in the face. Pick up this CD and beware, you will be humming *At the Spine* for a long time. At the Spine will be playing Mootsy's again July 26th with Crosstide, come early or miss out!! This show is bound to sell out!! (Mootsy's Rag, Issue 4, June 2002).

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