

= Community Trolls =

Community Trolls was the group name of a short @-@ lived musical duo between Michael Stipe of R.E.M. and Matthew Sweet . In 1983 , they collaborated as part of the Athens , Georgia music scene , writing and recording three songs together . One of the compositions , " Tainted Obligation " , was nearly released on a compilation album in 1986 , and later appeared on bootlegs ; it was released officially in 2002 . Another Community Trolls ' song , " Six Stock Answers " , appeared in an unreleased indie film featuring Stipe , Sweet and some of their friends .

Community Trolls , who may have at times included additional band members , performed in public at least twice . By sometime in 1984 , however , Sweet began distancing himself from the Athens music scene , and in 1985 he got a record deal and moved to New York . While some people accused him of using his Athens music connections to get ahead and then desert the scene , R.E.M. did not hold any hard feelings towards him .

= = Background = =

As a teenager in Lincoln , Nebraska , Sweet was a big fan of Mitch Easter . Easter produced R.E.M. ' s first single , the Hib @-@ Tone version of " Radio Free Europe " . Sweet loved its B @-@ side , " Sitting Still " , and became a fan of the band . When R.E.M. performed in Lincoln in September 1982 , Sweet went to the show . At that point R.E.M. were still relatively unknown , so there was almost nobody at the concert . Sweet met the band and gave Michael Stipe a tape of songs he had been working on . R.E.M. was from Athens , Georgia , which was becoming famous for its vibrant music scene . Sweet had also read about Athens in New York Rocker magazine .

R.E.M. put Sweet in touch with Easter , who wrote Sweet a number of long letters , and suggested he move to Athens after graduating from high school . Meanwhile , Stipe really liked Sweet ' s tape , and he also played it for his sister , Lynda , and friend Linda Hopper , who were both in the band Oh @-@ OK . All three sent Sweet postcards saying he should come perform in Athens , with Lynda and Linda inviting him to open for Oh @-@ OK there . Sweet told his parents that he wanted to study at the University of Georgia , in Athens . Within weeks of moving there , he had become a member of Oh @-@ OK , who recorded their EP Furthermore What in August 1983 with him on board . While a member of Oh @-@ OK , Sweet also began collaborating with Michael Stipe as the band Community Trolls .

= = Songs = =

Sometime in the autumn of 1983 , Stipe and Sweet wrote at least three songs together . Of their songwriting process , Sweet has said : " [Stipe] was the real powerhouse behind it . I was pretty tentative in those days . We just sat around , Michael went through the little book he wrote lyrics in , with me just kind of strumming along behind . "

= = = " Tainted Obligation " = = =

They recorded their three compositions with producer John Keane that fall , but only one of the tracks from the session , " Tainted Obligation " , has been officially released . Stipe plays accordion on the song , and Sweet acoustic guitar , with vocals by both .

In 1986 , " Tainted Obligation " was planned for inclusion on the Zippo / Demon Records compilation album Don ' t Shoot , but ultimately was left off . It was included on a UK cassette advance version of the compilation , but was removed before the album was officially released . In the early 1990s , the song surfaced as " Tainted Obligations " on R.E.M. bootlegs such as Stab It and Steer It and Chestnut . The track was released officially on the 2002 Matthew Sweet compilation To Understand : The Early Recordings of Matthew Sweet . In a review of the album , Rolling Stone critic Gavin Edwards describes the song as " enchanting " and as having " harmonies as pretty as you can imagine " .

= = = " Six Stock Answers " and " My Roof to Your Roof " = = =

Two other documented Community Trolls ' songs are entitled " Six Stock Answers " and " My Roof to Your Roof " . " Six Stock Answers " , whose vocals are by Stipe , was used in an unreleased low @-@ budget forty @-@ five @-@ minute Super @-@ 8 film called Just Like a Movie . It was shot in September 1983 in Athens by New York Rocker photographer Laura Levine , a friend of the members of R.E.M. Those with acting roles included Levine , Michael Stipe , Sweet , Hopper , Lynda Stipe , and R.E.M. ' s Bill Berry . One scene in the film , a parody of the " Subterranean Homesick Blues " sequence in D. A. Pennebaker 's Bob Dylan documentary Dont Look Back , shows Michael Stipe wearing a skirt and tights flipping placards with the song 's lyrics , " Six stock answers to 74 @,@ 000 questions " repeated ad nauseam . Just Like a Movie 's plot has two rival bands performing on the same night , leading up to the climax question of " Which band is everybody going to go see ? "

= = Live performances = =

Community Trolls ' first public performance was busking outside the 40 Watt Club in Athens in September , 1983 . On September 30 , Community Trolls played a set between two R.E.M. sets at the Stitchcraft in Athens , performing four songs : " Six Stock Answers " , " My Roof to Your Roof " , " Tainted Obligation " and the Velvet Underground 's " Pale Blue Eyes " . (R.E.M. biographer Marcus Gray believes it is likely that footage of the show , including the Trolls ' set , was used in Just Like a Movie .) Part of R.E.M. ' s performance , and the Trolls ' four songs , have been released on the R.E.M. bootleg 20th Century Boys Volume 1 . Sweet performed with members of R.E.M. at least one other time while he was in Athens : When R.E.M. shared a bill with Oh @-@ OK on October 3 , 1983 , at the University of Georgia 's Legion Field , Sweet joined R.E.M. onstage and played guitar .

= = Possible other band members = =

Although only Stipe and Sweet performed in the studio on " Tainted Obligation " , it is not clear whether other musicians may have sometimes been included in the band . Gray writes that " the line @-@ up of the Community Trolls remains elusive , but Sweet was guitarist and singer " . In the book Rolling Stone 's Alt @-@ Rock @-@ A @-@ Rama , their line @-@ up is described as an " Athens @-@ based , looseknit ensemble , which included Matthew Sweet , [and which] featured Michael Stipe 's vocals on a handful of tracks " .

= = Aftermath = =

Around the time as he was collaborating with Stipe , and while still a member of Oh @-@ OK , Sweet began writing songs for another project , the Buzz of Delight , which consisted of Sweet and former Oh @-@ OK drummer David Pierce . In October 1983 , they recorded a six @-@ song EP , Soundcastles , released in the spring of 1984 on DB Records , and performed in New York , Florida and Georgia State to promote it . In the summer and November 1984 , the Buzz of Delight recorded more songs , none of which were immediately released . (In 1990 , one previously unreleased Buzz of Delight track appeared on the DB Records compilation Squares Blot out the Sun , and , in 2002 , three others on To Understand .) Meanwhile , Stipe continued his work with R.E.M. , who were getting acclaim and success with their album Murmur . In 1983 , it was named album of the year by Rolling Stone and Trouser Press , and by the middle of 1984 , it had sold 200 @,@ 000 copies . In November 1983 , R.E.M. began recording their follow @-@ up , Reckoning .

Sweet began distancing himself from other people in the Athens music scene and in 1984 quit Oh @-@ OK ; by 1985 , the Buzz of Delight had broken up . That year , Sweet got a record deal with CBS Records and moved to New York City . He was accused of being opportunistic and using his Athens connections to get a record deal and leave . Sweet maintains that when he went to CBS , he

never claimed to have anything to do with Athens , so that nobody could say he used the town . He says that after months of living in Athens , he realized things weren 't as happy there as everyone pretended , and that there was backstabbing going on . In 1993 , he said , " Things really turned dark there when R.E.M. got famous , because everyone wanted that fame so bad . Maybe I wanted it too , but I had this musical goal all of my own and wasn 't going to go along with the way it was done there . " Everybody was telling him that he should be touring and building up a following before doing his record , like R.E.M. had done . However , more than making the record itself and becoming a rock star , Sweet 's main motivation was to get money to buy studio gear .

R.E.M. , for their part , held no hard feelings towards Sweet . Peter Buck has said , " The guy wanted to make records . I don 't see anything wrong with that . " Years later , Sweet recorded with R.E.M. ' s Mike Mills on the song " The Ballad of El Goodo " , on the Big Star tribute Big Star , Small World . It was originally scheduled to come out in 1998 , but its release was delayed until 2006 . On March 26 , 2011 , Sweet and Mills performed the Big Star song " September Gurls " together live at a tribute to Big Star singer Alex Chilton ; Stipe also performed at this concert , singing " The Letter " , by Chilton 's 1960s group , the Box Tops .