

SLED ISLAND - The Obits

**Brooklyn foursome
reward Sled Island
(musically, that is)
By Matthew Hagarty**

The Obits is the latest project from underground pioneer Rick Froberg, known most recently from the intense Telecaster attack of the Hot Snakes, the legendary Drive Like Jehu and Pitchfork. Also, the 41-year-old Brooklynite is a doodler by day who pays rent with his bold, strong and dependably cheeky illustrations. Unbelievably, rock 'n' roll doesn't even pay the bills of the guy who wrote the seminal Suicide Invoice. It's a hard knock life.

Three years ago, the Obits came around fairly easily for Froberg and the band, comprised of ex-Edsel guitarist and vocalist Sohrab Habibion, Greg Simpson on bass, and Scott Gursky on drums.

"It's just friends in the neighborhood, y'know? A bunch of people who were into doing the same thing," explains Froberg about the three gentlemen who surround him on stage and in the studio. "It wasn't a big thing. It was very casual and ended up being what it is. It took on a life of its own."

Carrying on with successful tradition, the Obits reveal the trademark Froberg sound. Listening to their Sub Pop debut full length, *I Blame You*, you can hear the same biting surf-style guitar and intense vocals, but this time around, things have more room to breathe and it's a bit more easy listening than Froberg's past projects. Attribute the comparatively softer edges to the band's relaxed creative process.

"With a different group of people, everything changes. In the Hot Snakes, I lived on the other side of the country — we swapped a lot of tapes back and forth. (We'd) get together in short stints. With this, we're all in the same room all the time. Things are just in a more relaxed space. It's a lot easier."

Froberg actually sounds like either the most humble person in the world, or just completely over his past accomplishments.

"I really don't think about the other bands I was in," he plainly admits. "None of the things I've done in the past matter that much to me. I know people are into them and that's great, but that's just what I was doing then and this is what I'm doing now."

The Obits is a band that slowly slid into formation. They've been jamming since 2005, after the Hot Snakes croaked. They came out of the garage in 2008 with the release of the One Cross Apiece / Put It in Writing single, signed to Sub Pop, and put out the full-length and the "I Can't Lose" single in time for Record Store Day.

Of course, the band has generated a boat load of Internet buzz as Froberg fans enthusiastically track his every musical move and document their packed live shows with souvenir bootlegs. Even so, Froberg looks at it in a refreshingly simple way, which one may not expect to come from such an influential songwriter.

"By now, I think most people have figured out that rock 'n' roll isn't the most lucrative of careers," he says. "Even if you just want to be famous, it's not really the place to be. I really like doing it, I think it's a great thing and that's that. Music should be its own reward.

"Or don't even bother."