

# TOUGHER THAN

● Having flown the indie coop, is there plume at the top for squawk-of-the-town good owl rock 'n' roll fan(tails) BIRDLAND? As they take their place in the Top 40 pecking order are they tougher than the roost or is their swooped-up s(p)eed pop just the perfect antidote to chart tweets like Big Fun?

Pigeon English: STEVEN WELLS. View To A Trill: KEVIN CUMMINS

“A nd we’ve got a NEW NUMBER ONE!” babbles Bruno Brookes twattishly. “Knocking Kylie off the top spot with their new single – ‘Sleep With Me’ – it’s BIRDLAND!”

Scweem, scweem, scweem go the lickle gurlies as they claw the air desperately trying to touch the tight, denim defined testicles of the four blond, skinny mop-tops who prance and preen and play proper rock music.

Then Robert notices that one of the fans is wearing an “I Love Kylie” badge. She is snarling at him and giving him the finger. HAWK-PHOOIE! – the girl spits a huge wad of slimy green bogie-studded mucus straight in his eye. BOOT! – he lashes back.

UUUUURRRGH! he screams as the girl ducks, grabs his cuban heel and with almost inhuman strength drags him off-stage. CRUNCH! Fifty ‘Kylie-Kickers’ (TM) find their target. MUNCH! Fifty sets of perfect pearly teeth taste his flesh . . .

“AAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!” screamed Birdland, clutching the sweat-sodden ‘Jim Morrison’ (TM) duvet cover. “Not another dream about *Top Of The Pops!*” Every night they had had the same nightmare. Ever since they’d heard that their midweek chart position was Number Ten they’d tossed and turned and chewed pillow. It was January 1990. Sales of pop singles had reached an all time low, letting ugly rock bands with freaky haircuts swarm into the charts.

“Come on!” spat Robert, ripping ‘Patti Smith’ (TM) pyjama bottoms from his pipe cleaner legs and thrusting savagely into his ‘Joey Ramone’ (TM) jeans, “it’s time to visit Madame Tussauds’ Rock Circus in London to do the poxy *NME* interview.”

On the way out of the house the lads noticed a guitar amp that had somehow remained undamaged from last night’s gig. BOOT! CRUNCH! SMASH! WRECK! DESTROY!

## ASSAULT AND ACID BATTERY

“NO WAY are we having our picture taken with Jason Donovan!” Birdland are not in rock ‘n’ roll heaven. They have come to worship at the wax temple of pop culture and THE ENEMY is within. “What the f— is Jason Donovan doing here anyway?” they sneer.

Just then smoke pours out of



“The whole thing about Big Fun is that they’re just in it for the money. Money and girlfriends and designer clothes and the whole *Face* thing.” – Lee

Little Richard’s piano. “Glory Glory Hallelujah! Rising on a column of dry ice – it’s THE KING!” “Elvis was never *thar*thin!” cry Birdland. He probably is now, says I. We schlepp behind Birdland to Trafalgar Square, four blond-barnets and are those legs or have you got eight pieces of string hanging down from your rock ‘n’ roll jumpers? Kevin Cummins grumbles and

kicks ass and gets them to stand with birdseed in their outstretched hands. The flying vermin of Trafalgar Square crawl all over them. “Piss on my cat!” exclaims Sid, “this coat is f—ing wrecked!” “Nobody said it would be easy,” points out manager Wayne Morris. “Nobody said it would be hard,” snarls a petulant Sid. To make things worse the square is packed with hundreds of

ACID HOUSE HEADS protesting their right to party. Surrounded as he is by kids in schmileyschmutter, Sid cracks:

“What a load of utter SHIT! I mean this Acid House is just a load of f—ing WANK! The police should replace their sirens with Acid House, it’d send the criminals to sleep . . .”

Sid bloody hates Acid House. Not that he knows all that much about it.

“A lot of the people that are at this demonstration are just here for – oh yeah, let’s get pissed and have a fight . . .”

SKKKREEEEEEEE REWIND! No, that’s what he *actually* said!

“I went to school with bastards like these and they just used to follow things like this so they could get pissed. I don’t like it because, well, for the same reasons I don’t

like *Emmerdale Farm*.”

Why don’t you like *Emmerdale Farm*?

“I just don’t, OK?”

Sid is a member of a band about whom tales of violence are legion. They have been battered by angry sound engineers, slung over the boots of cars by belligerent bouncers, chased by the friends of hecklers who they’ve Cuban heel booted in the head.

At a Scottish gig Birdland found themselves using a £12,000 PA. So enraged were they that they couldn’t place their boots on the monitors (in the approved rock ‘n’ roll style) that Lee took his guitar and CRUSHED the monitors one by one SMASH! SMASH! SMASH! SMASH! The regular trashings are not part of some spoilt brat amphetamine hysteria

a la The Who – Birdland bash and batter inanimate objects for the same reason they occasionally trash and batter each other; because sometimes you can push a guy TOO FAR!

Robert waves his hands and jabberwocks insanely:

“We just DO it! There’s a lot of ANGER about how everything is so TRENDY . . .”

“Yeah!” spits Lee. “Yeah! There’s a lot of that! I left school two years ago now, that’s five years of school and I used to think I was some sort of f—ing FREAK because, like, I just wasn’t interested in any of that SHIT!”

“You get a phone call at three o’clock in the morning,” rants Sid, “and you get out of bed and you’re completely dazed and you pick up the phone and they’re going – you f—ing WANKER! – and loads of people are LAUGHING! People ringing pretending to be Lee!”

“I mean, my girlfriend – and you can put this in, I know who they are – my girlfriend’s been getting letters saying really horrible things about me but I now know who it is and I’m going to take great pleasure in stopping it. This is just jealous f—ers basically, because we’ve worked hard for it and they can’t be bothered getting off their fat arses in their poxy little pop bands in Birmingham and so they take it out on us!”

There is a snotty, inarticulate RAGE about Birdland, an anger and a hatred that they’ve yet to get down on record. They are the geeks, dweebs and freaks SPAT upon at school by the ‘trendies’. Now, as chart success beckons, they are on the verge of getting REVENGE! They want to take the shitty, plastic wank-culture of Kylie and Guns ‘N’ Roses, screw it into a ball, wipe their arses on it and RAM it down the screaming throats of the trendy BASTARDS!

But first they have to go and do a photo session for *The Face*.

## KILL KILL KILL THE TRENDY SKUM!

THE BIRDIES are bored and bugged about in the *Face* photographer’s studio. Kale squats on the floor with a paper cup on his head. Simon whips out his yo-yo and attempts to knock it off like some pop-art William Tell. It is time for a wind up.

“The problem is not that all blonds are sex mad brainless bimbos,” I say, “but that sex mad brainless bimbos invariably opt to be blond.”

Lee (I think, it’s very hard to tell them apart) takes the bait.

“What? Yeah, but that’s talking about *women!*”

It says bimbos, it doesn’t say which sex.

“What? Where does it say that then?”

In this month’s copy of *New Woman*.

“Oh well, it must be true then.”

They stick on a tape of the Stones’ ‘Some Girls’ album, I try to take it off and replace it with something decent.

“Look, this is *our* photo session, right?”

“There’s a lot of SNOBBERY around,” says Robert. “People say – oh, you shouldn’t say you like The Rolling Stones ‘cos it’ll look shit! – It’s pathetic! There isn’t anybody who’s been as consistently brilliant as The Rolling Stones have at writing songs!”

“Yeah!” agrees Lee. “I mean *Lazy (the label)* were really worried about me meeting Douglas Hart (*the Mary Chain* bassist) because they thought I’d lick his arse, they thought I’d suck his dick or something . . .”

Oh yeah, big FANS are Birdland. You must know that. Every interview they’ve ever done has taken the piss out of them for the fact that they suck and lick rock star arse and dick just like

# FEATHERS?

**"When the majors phoned up we charged them £1,500 each just to talk to us!" — Robert**

any bunch of healthy teenage tykes in love with the rock 'n' roll woah! And it pisses them off.

"Yeah!" says Lee. "That really pisses us off! People seem to be amazed by this! They actually LIKE MUSIC! They actually PLAY RECORDS!"

What if you actually met Patti Smith and she turned out to be a real wanker?

"She'd probably cook us that health food. We're not daft! We know that everybody has to shit and shower," says Robert. Little Lee is not so sure.

"Um, well, I saw Debbie Harry at Borderline and she had this kind of GLOW around her..."

Are you sure that wasn't just your reflected lust?

"YEAH! There's certainly a lot of that..."

## STORMING THE KINGDOM OF KYLIE WITH LOADED AK47S

ROBERT: "THE fact that we got in at Number 32 is incredible, when you think of all the CRAP. And like we're a REAL BAND, we're not doing any Dance music, we're really out on our own, you know?"

Lee: "I mean SAW is just too much. SAW is just musical McDonalds really."

Aren't you worried that the charts will change you more than you'll change the charts?

Robert: "Not at all because we were not going to let them f— us around like that. I mean, we'll change when we want to. When the majors phoned up we charged them £1,500 each just to talk to us!"

What companies were actually stupid enough to pay?

Robert: "Virgin, f—ing Polydor got in there with a cheque, you know. The kind of people who do that ought to be sacked..."

But going on the front cover of *The Face*, isn't that SELLING OUT?

Lee: "Nah nah nah! We're going to be there rather than Big Fun with their conditioned hair and..."

Do you really hate Big Fun?

Lee: "YEAH! It makes you want to puke! I'm glad those bands are there, though, because they're so crap and pathetic that they make us look good! The whole thing about those bands is that they're just in it for the money! Money and girlfriends and wearing these designer clothes and things and the whole *Face* thing."

Would you chin Big Fun if you met them?

Robert: "I wouldn't go anywhere they go!"

What about if you meet them at the *TOTP* studio? What if they came up to you and said—Hi! I think you guys are really great and I really like the single! It's great!—?

Robert: "I'd just say—OK, yeah, it isn't it? I think your record's CRAP! Why don't you make a record like that? Actually play something, can you do that? You wankers!"

Is smashing your gear up a sexual thing?

Robert: "It's all part of it—the sexual thing, the aggression, the violence—animal instinct!"

What about when people get hurt?

Lee: "People should expect it, if they come to the gig they should know what to expect. They should know that if you're going to throw things or shout abuse you're going to get smacked in the head. Like when that guy got the guitar in the head..."

## SMASH THE DISCOS—HANG THE DJS—WHY PHIL COLLINS IS SHITE

WITH BIRDLAND, The House Of Love, The Stone Roses and even

the Happy Mondays edging the SAWdroids out of the charts, Robert is hoping for a return to the golden age of British pop music (1977–1979) when *TOTP* regularly featured the likes of The Jam, The Banshees and even Sham 69.

"In '75 it was that disco shit and it seems to have come back, doesn't it, that (*spit*) DISCO!?! I mean, these Top 40 Radio 1 DJs! They didn't play 'Paradise' because it didn't have any bass on it! Just because we wanted it to sound tinny! It's just shit, the BASTARDS! They're the f—ing snobs, not us!"

Whose the biggest wanker in pop?

Robert is in no doubt.

"Phil Collins."

"Yeah!" agrees Lee, almost shaking with disgust. "On *Juke Box Jury* he said our record was crap! He said that The Sex Pistols were *real* 'angry' music! Guys like him are scared! The fact that we're in the chart has really shit them up! I mean, our midweek position is down to the fans, Joe Public is going to go—Oh no, look at those FREEEEEEKS! Something's actually happening! I've got to be part of it!—and the next record we're going to put out is going to chart as well and it's going to be REALLY NOISY!"

But isn't Dance music what's really 'happening' now?

"Maybe us slagging off Acid House now is like Phil Collins

slagging off punk in 1976, I don't know," admits Robert. Lee, however, is having none of this liberal bollocks.

"I don't think it's the new punk or even a new sort of music! I just can't see *anything* there! It's all very laid back and drowsy, it's all about (*spit*) dancing!"

But isn't an Acid bash just like taking speed and bashing your blinking brains out at a Birdland gig? I mean, what's the real difference?

"We don't take f—ing speed!"

The fans do, don't they?

"NO NO NO!" screams Lee.

"Our fans call themselves the

Surfing Birds and we don't see *any* drugs! They don't *need* drugs! I mean, I don't wonder they call it

'Acid' music because how the f—

could you listen to it otherwise?

It's unlistenable! I've been to those clubs, you know, and to me it's just KERRRRR-APPPP! I mean you're trying to talk to some guy who's just had four E tabs."

"We still get chased down the street by these guys in gigantic flared trousers," claims Robert.

You get chased down the street by people in gigantic flared trousers? No wonder you don't need drugs.

"This guy got out of a cab in the middle of Birmingham," claims Lee, "and he said—You're f—ing my girlfriend!—and just started laying into me!"

Were you?

"No, she wanted to f— me but I

was already going out with someone so I didn't."

Do you get many offers of casual sexual intercourse?

"Yeah, yeah, yeah!" says Robert. "Lots of times. It's easy, it's too easy..."

If you had to choose between an afternoon with the 16 most sexually arousing partners of your choice and a tube of jelly and some ace drugs OR playing a really good gig, which would you choose?

"Um..." says Robert, hoping that his girlfriend isn't reading this. "um...er...we'd try to do both."

## MOORE IS LESS

I'VE GOT Sid and Kale on their own and the conversation drags itself back to Birdland as fans...

"All my heroes are dead," says Sid. "John Lennon is dead, Peter Sellers is dead. Jim Morrison is dead. Janis Joplin is dead. Jimi Hendrix is dead..."

"And my hero doesn't play James Bond anymore," chips in Kale.

Sean Connery?

"Roger Moore..."

Do what? That motley scrote!?

Are you serious?

"Dead serious. Connery was good, yeah, but Roger Moore was much more suave. Roger Moore sums up Bond, like, sarcastic grins and all that..."

Yeah, but he wasn't very rock 'n' roll was he?

Sid looks at me. His eyes narrow. I have gone and said the wrong thing.

"Yeah! So we're fans! So what! I mean everybody seems to be making out we're big deal fans ALL THE TIME! I mean, the f—ing Primitives! They're fans! Paul likes the Velvet Underground and nobody goes on about that! Just because we happen to say that we like bands we get this crap rammed down our throats all the time and we're getting *pissed off*!"

Pissed off dweebs, raging trainspotters, angry freaks, snarling geeks—Birdland are the kind of guys who write letters to music magazines without a letters page. They're the kind of people who can point to Madame Tussauds' version of The Beatles and tell you immediately what instruments the wax works *should* be holding. I mean, tread on Birdland's blue suede shoes and they'll kick your head in.

Birdland are anything but macho and their flirtation with violence is made all the more surreal by its deranged Gerry Anderson campness. They have taken all the stuttering, inarticulate sexual energy of the teenage male that usually drives its victims into musical extremism or Metal catharsis and moulded it into a post modernist trainspotter's wet dream of a chainsaw massacre live-show which resembles nothing more or less than four Sting-lookalike Sid Viciouses who've just been told that the sound engineer spent the sound check with his hand up Nancy's skirt. And they're in the charts.

This is shaping up to be a very strange decade.

**"On Juke Box Jury Phil Collins said our record was crap! He said that The Sex Pistols were *real* 'angry' music! Guys like him are scared!" — Lee**



Sid, Robert, Kale and Lee research their version of 'The Birdy Song'