



Scaley models: Reptile with muscley mate; Dora (left) and Magga (right).

DON'T MENTION THE COD WAR

● Slithering savagely from the sexy snake-pits of downtown Reykjavik comes the evolutionary guards of the unstoppable Icelandic pop-invasion — REPTILE. They spent four hours locked in a New York hotel bedroom with STEVEN WELLS and spunky lenseman TIM PATON. Their top lips sweated savagely but they survived. This is their story . . .

Evil monkeys are go! As I interview Reptile I am watching the movie *Monkeyshine*. The CD player is blasting out Extreme Noise Terror's 'Stick His Head On A Pole'. We are all shamefully smashed out of our heads on crack. This is New York.

In the movie this paraplegic fellow is tormented by a super-intelligent monkey. He lures the furry fiend onto his shoulder for a snog and chomps it in the neck. He shakes his head from side to side until, with a loud RIP!, the monkey's head comes off and splatters against the patio doors.

The horrible, horrible thing is that Magga, the violinist from Reptile, is the spitting image of the evil monkey. I mean this monkey was like a *total* bastard, dude. It killed the geezer's mum and his best friend and was trying to stick a hypo in his girlfriend's eyeball. Magga looks totally cute and totally evil, she is My Little Pony as conceived by Charles Manson.

In the video for the Reptile EP 'O' the camera catches her in mid-grin, gap-toothed, squinting and crosseyed, her vole-like nose as wrinkled as a gerro's scrotal sack. Evil. Pure evil. The Norse legends warn us of the demonic Loki and his mastery of disguise . . .

It's a lovely sunny day in Greenwich Village but I'm doing what all Brit music hacks do in New York ie sit on a hotel bed, drink, watch the totally sensational TV and interview a band or two.

This is Reptile. *NME* Single Of The Week band. I went to see them with the normally sober and taciturn Danny Kelly. Mr Kelly threw his arms up in the air. "Hallelujah!" he said. "Hallelujah! Easily the best band I've seen so far this year, dude, call me a sentimental old cockernee if you must!"

Strange they are. They squeak and blip and make jazzy farting noises and generally come across as a little bit mental. Like a cross between The Pogues, The Sugarcubes and a modern jazz combo except that, inevitably, they are already sick of being compared to the bloody bastard booring barf-me-out-to-the-max Sugarcubes, but hey!, they come from Iceland, they have female singers and they are a little bit strange.

It turns out that the mad monkey woman, Magga, is as crazy as she looks (very crazy). She says she wants to die in a

plane crash and gets all excited when she flies. She recently beat another woman into squitting red jelly at a gig because "she was touching me and she was ill in the head". So inevitably you ask yourself how she would deal with a slaving pack of bloody axe wielding Hells Angels armed with shotguns and nuclear chainsaws?

"I would choose the biggest and shout at him." What would you shout at him? "I would say — What did you call me? — yeah, of course! If that didn't work I would find out a way to kill him but I think I would frighten him to go away. With my eyes."

DINO-NASTY

One of the secrets of the fresh and bouncy Reptile sound is that since the band formed (early versions were slithering around in 1984) they have hardly rehearsed. They established a large domestic following by busking in the doorways of other people's gigs ala Bragg and, like almost every Icelandic superstar I've ever met, they refuse to take anything too seriously.

Except that they're not called Reptile. Really they are called *Risaedian* which is Icelandic for Big Lizard which, apparently sounds too much like The Flying Lizards.

Anyway, upon discovering that Big Lizard was English for the ancient Greek *Dino Saur* they decided to be marketed in the English speaking world as Reptile so none of you would get them mixed up with Dinosaur Jr or T-Rex. There are no Reptiles in Iceland except in the zoos. Children, male children that is, do not go through a compulsory obsession with dinosaurs just before they hit the screaming rapids of puberty the way English

boys do. Instead they draw pictures and paint plastic models of whales.

Which is weird because Iceland and Japan are the only two countries still dedicated to wiping whales off the face of the planet. Which is even weirder because both Iceland and Japan are currently the leading manufacturers of pop-as-an-offensive weapon. Both these island states team with hundreds of thousands of edge-walking nutty musos who are even now planning their massed assault upon the Angloyacking pop mainstream.

I've no idea about Japan but you've got to figure that Iceland aka This Year's Akron, Ohio, is no more blessed with whacky and talented musicians than any other collection of 250,000 individuals in the industrialised world. Jostling behind Reptile are blasphemy and blood rockers Ham, stropky punker dogs Bless, rockabilly mindbenders Oxtor LSS and speed metalheads Bootlegs. What we are talking about is a *scene*.

Gigs, riffs, guitar strings, drumkits and sexual partners are shared in a sort of mini-bohemian welfare state that is, inevitably torn asunder by jealousy, laziness and recording contracts. It certainly *isn't* the sunshine and the drugs because Iceland and Jamaica have almost *nothing* in common apart from the fact that neither nation has ever won the Eurovision Song Contest.

"You have little greenhouses under your bed," says bendy-kneed saxchick Dora, "with fluorescent light. Also we have many big fish flies. Much bigger than house flies. They shit on the stinking fish and then we sell it to England. English people are so dead and so colour-little. I feel them all very boring. No, you are a maniac . . ."

WHAT MEANS 'PROMISCUOUS'?

If The Primitives had the deadly dress sense of Voice Of The Beehive and the pop sensibility of Charles Bukowski and they came from a country where it has only recently become possible to buy beer . . .

"The nightlife in Iceland is getting very boring because of the beer. You have to get so much beer drunk to get drunk that now people aren't drunk until three in the morning and what fun is that? There is a very small acid house scene. It is about 15 very stupid people who have been to London."

How do you want to die, Dora? "I want to be shot in the head in my house. By myself. Many people kill themselves in Iceland because they get tired waiting for the sun . . ."

And so what do you do in the long winter months?

"We f—."

Are Icelanders very promiscuous?

"What means 'promiscuous'?" Do people hop from bed to bed?

"Er, 'hop'?"

Is it quite cool being a woman in Iceland?

"It is very easy to be a woman in Iceland," says male guitarist Soggi. "Isn't it girls?"

"No!" spits Magga, clenching her furry little fists. "It is not easy. But there are no wolfwhistling in Iceland." "If you walk past a building site," claims Dora, "and if they say — 'Hey baby! Show us your big tits!' — then we just say back — 'Show me your big willy! Flap it to me!'"

"What," asks Magga, "is 'willy'?"

Despite what I'd read in the One Little Indian press release, the band have never been called 'The Sheep Shaggers'. Although Iceland, like Australia, has more sheep than people, the band are quite adamant that they have never ridden woollyback, Dora insists that it is impossible for her and Magga to "shag the sheep" because the vast majority of sheep who reach the age of consent are female.

Soggi starts to drool. "Sabrina, she has a record called 'Like A Yo Yo' in the record shop in Iceland and every time we pass the shop we have a good look at Sabrina."

"Many people kill themselves in Iceland because they get tired waiting for the sun . . ."

You're saying that you fancy Sabrina?

"Yeah! Her intelligence and personality. Samantha Fox is a good singer. Dead good looking and fantastic."

It's furry fist-clenchin' time for Magga.

"I don't even have a *humour* for Samantha Fox!"

"We like Kim Wilde . . ." says Soggi seriously.

"Yes, Kim-Wilde!" Magga nods her furry head.

"All The Kids In America," confirms Soggi. "Bananarama are not very popular in Iceland."

Does it ever rain fish in Iceland? "No."

What if the space aliens who fly the UFOs turn out to be whales like in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*? What if they shower Iceland with radioactive space faeces in revenge for all the whale murders?

"I think that would be a very good thing."

SLITHERING HEIGHTS

Reptile are geeky and gawky and altogether less slick and cynical than the Cubes. They act like they've just stepped off the fish boat because, well, they just *have*. Reptile have never meant to be the new face of national marketing strategy. They are bemused.

"All these things just seem to happen to us. We are a very lucky band. We hardly rehearse, we have done very few gigs and it is just stupid."

They have endured the first *real* test that a band breaking America must endure — being interviewed by American journalists. Imagine if everybody you spoke to for an entire day was Jonathan King. The Horror.

So — have they picked up any amusing sayings or expressions in the Big Apple?

"Major cool, man!" says bassist Ivar.

"You got the crazy eyes of a drummer, boy!" says Toti the drummer boy.

Backstage at the Pyramid Club and Reptile are waiting to get paid and go home. A crazy New Yorker has commandeered the instruments and won't let the band go home until he's played them all. More crazy New Yorkers are just standing around the dressing room and shouting. Nobody knows who these people are and nobody dare ask.

I am introduced to a large gentleman in a combat jacket and ripped jeans who turns out to be John Curd — the London promoter. I tell him that one of his bouncers nearly broke my arm once. Gleelessly he prods my arm and tells me that the bouncer failed to do his job properly.

Everybody in the room is fazed except Reptile. When you're the only cold blooded buskers in a nation descended direct from the loins of Odin, you don't get upset easily.

One more thing. When we started the interview there were three large flies buzzing around the hotel room. Big flies, much bigger than the average house fly. The band all chewed throughout the interview although none of them ever flashed any gum. When the interview finished, about the same time as the beer ran out, there was not . . . a single . . . fly . . . to be found ANYWHERE!

David Cronenberg beware! Reptile have got your number. Buzzzz.