



THIS IS IGGY POP

Auckland — The White Heron, Parnell, Wednesday July 11. Osterburg *aka* Iggy Pop, is in town to promote his new album, *New Values*.

The sound of a guitar is heard, as we step out of the lift on the second floor. In his room, Iggy is sitting in bright orange pyjamas (with red spots), doodling on his left-handed Fender. As we enter, he gives it to his manager to get it repaired.

He gets dressed and sits down, spilling cigarettes, joking, laughing, moving round. Throughout the interview he seems to be in constant motion, checking his hair in the mirror or jumping up to illustrate a point.

Are you happy with *New Values*?

"Yeah — but it's a little cerebral, there's a little too much ego in there — but yeah I like it. I had a lotta fun writing it. It got a tiny bit over-professionalised for my taste. But all in all, it came out pretty well."

There's not a great deal of guitar on it?

"No, because — well I wrote it on guitar and at the point we did the album I was pretty well unrecordable. I just told Scotty what to play and we used more than one instrument to get something near the sound I wanted. It didn't quite work out but I think that's only one side of it."

"The songs are awful damn good — I'm proud of the songs, I think the words are good, my voice is in good form on it and I like the theme of the album."

What's the theme for you?

"Well it's about getting along if you're not like everybody else. Because usually if you want to do something like travel, and have some fun, and eat good food, and be intoxicated most of your life — things like that usually you have to develop a pot belly and put on a f**king monkeysuit — you have to be a shithead. I've managed to tread a very narrow line (stands and demonstrates) a sort of do-si-do through the lonely financial zone. That's what the album's about. It's about me coming to terms with commercialism and the masses. It's about all the crap I've been through. I thought I'd get it all over with on one album."

"I used to be a tough nut for a half hour a week, and that would be when I'd go play, and the rest of the time I'd be a mess. Now I'm a tough son-of-a-bitch all the time. I'm even tough while I'm asleep."

You enjoy that?

"Yes. But it sometimes gets maddening because the industry I'm involved in is so big and has so many heads. The trick is to get them working for you instead of you working for them. And you do that by being a conniving little son-of-a-bitch. Which is what I've always been, I'm just developing my art." (Laughs).

How much did James Williamson have to do with the album?

"A great deal. He only co-wrote one song — 'Don't Look Down', but he encouraged me very strongly. He and David (Bowie) are strong

enough personalities to handle me in the studio. Studios are often a volatile situation for me because I don't like to compromise much."

"I don't know if you're familiar with my blurt technique but I'm basically a method singer in that I don't put pen to paper, I just wait until — 'Alright, I wanna sing now' and it comes out. 'With such a simple method, half of what comes out is great and the other half is blathering crap. I used to say — 'Great; Print it.'"

"Williamson would say, 'Look Jim, goddam it, I'm not letting you get away with it,' and we'd almost come to blows and he would make me sit down and throw out what was nonsense and make it make sense. James has added a nice conservatism."

"When the Stooges died James went one way and I went the other. James decided he wanted to learn, he was sick of being ignorant and uninterested. So he attends three schools simultaneously. He lives in LA — but that's his problem. He studies computer technology at Calpal, electronics at LA Community College and production at this great school called Sherwood Oaks Community College. So he got taught by Spector — who does seminars, Richard Perry — who he said was a pain in the ass, Tom Dowd, I forget the rest."

And I thought, 'I bet he's done his homework,' because James is thorough about whatever he does — 'he should produce a good album.'"

Will the next album be different?

"It'll definitely be more a guitar album. I've hired Williamson again as producer."

"That's another thing. You have to remember, I was in — *Will the real Sex Pistols please stand up*, I was in the Stooges. That was real. And now it's not real, because they're all dead or deranged, every one of them — I'm the only one left. I'm not gonna join a band who imitate what I did eight years ago. I'm all I've got. I'm not in a band anymore. If people work with me, they work for me."

So you won't be using the bands you used on the album and British Tour.

"No, I'm going to work with Glen Matlock on bass, James (Williamson) on guitar, (Klaus) Kruger on drums; the two Americans are out. I got bored to death with their f**king American pyrotechnic f**king fake machinations. They really think they know it all like, 'We gonna give some good solid rock'n' roll and eueghh' (laughs). I can't stand f**king rock'n'roll. I hate that word. There's nothing more useless in this world than a f**king rock and roll band. Oh God! 'We wanna suck your, aah ... grapefruit, honk honk' — F**king ass-holes."

"So I got rid of them. So it's down to James and Glen and Klaus and I. So it should be good."

"I did a good album called *The Idiot* with practically no guitar. You don't have to use one, but they are fun."

It wasn't as song oriented as the new one either?

"No, *The Idiot* was pretty much exercises. A lot of *New Values* is pretty much exercises. Musically they're not like an Elvis Costello song; na na na — which I hate too. I think he's a prick, hate his music, can't stand his phony stance. I'm sure when he goes to bed at night with his third rate groupie and his money — he's thinking about wars in Johannesburg. He's another one selling a bill of fake goods if I ever saw somebody — phony bastard."

Having lost the thread of the conversation at this stage I enquired what music he actually listened to. After mentioning the Residents and Roy Orbison, he explained.

"I like music with a bit of dignity to it. That's what I loved in the Sex Pistols sound, especially some of Glen's writing like 'Anarchy in the UK'. It had a majestic, dignified, swelling sound to it underpinning the singing. It's really beautiful."

Living in Germany is there much German music you're interested in?

"There's not much. Kraftwerk. They're great artisans and sometimes when they're in the mood to do something serious they're good. They're horny guys and they usually get seduced by the bourgeois, so they miss sometimes."

"There's Michael Rother from Neu. They're terrific."

"The music I get out of Germany comes from what I see and the people I know and not from music in general. I don't listen to much. If I want to feel musical, I take a walk."

I was thinking that some of the Stooges work had the same feeling as Can?

"Did you think so, really? That's great — I never thought of that."

The building up of tension.

"Yeah, the boot in it. And also I'd start off like this, 'It's 1969 OK ...' and then I'd end up screaming. I hadn't heard Can at the time. Actually there's great German music. Their ideas are all together, everything."

"Sometimes I wish I weren't a — well I'm a rock and roll star, you see and so my experiments become somewhat limited because of that."

"It's good to know your limitations too. I know what I'm good at. I'm good at sex, I'm good at repelling violence quickly at my gigs and I'm good at handing over some good animalistic music with a good beat. I can also think a bit, but I try not to dwell on it." (Laughs).

What about TV EYE?

"That's a load of shit. I put it out to get out of RCA. It's almost humorous actually. I had never done tours before and I thought I'd do some so I could learn to do it correctly. I've seen too many guys going off the deep end touring. So I had mostly dependable, schlock, crappola bands, heavily weighted toward American West Coasters. Those guys played like gorillas, (gets up and demonstrates their stances). And I'd think 'My God what are they doing to my music?'"

"Sometimes the best things are carried out as plots that take years to carry out. I'm a schemer. I have a masterplan. I know where I'll be in 5 years and I don't want to share that now."

When did you start formulating this plan?

"It was in '76 — so far it's right on schedule. It was when I got the chance to do 'Sister Midnight'. That was the first suggestion that I might do some work. David asked me to sing the single. After that started going well, and we planned an album I decided — well Jim, I've gone through life without a plan, I'd better draw one up."

"I think plans are more exciting than this living-for-the-moment shit."

Adam Gifford

