



Photo by Guy Richards

Screaming, Spliffs & Slothdom

The World Of Pumpkinhead

"What three videos would you take with you?"

"Put down *Edward Penishands*, it's an x-rated classic."

"Okay, next one. What fictional character would you take to your desert island?"

"Put Jessica Rabbit from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*?"

Typical. Boys in a band on the road — five minutes later they've transformed into a gang of beer swilling, pot smoking, cussing perverts. I'll drink to that.

Christchurch fivesome Pumpkinhead are sprawled over beds, couches and tables in a tiny unit of a Hamilton motel. All their belongings are spread around. With the expert help of his bandmates, guitarist Aaron Hogg is answering a *Desert Island Discs* questionnaire for student station Contact 89FM.

Today is the final day of Orientation week at Waikato University, and it coincides with the annual student pub crawl. Hoards of slaughtered 20 year olds have been wandering the kilometres between Hamilton's main street and the university, but a decent-sized bunch are conscious enough to turn up for the *Dave Dobbyn & Pumpkinhead Show* at the campus rec centre later in the evening.

Two noise complaints during Dobbyn's set forces plan B into action, and Pumpkinhead shift camp to the nearby Wailing Bongo venue. A string of gigs in quick succession have honed Pumpkinhead into a thundering live band. Tight

as a nun's twat, tonight they blistered through 'Bateman' and 'Third Eye', sweated buckets over 'Water' and 'Erase', and later collapsed in chairs backstage due to total exhaustion.

Before sunrise the following day, Aaron, drummer Jason Peters, bass player Vaughan Watson and guitarist David Hunt are gliding back to Christchurch, leaving singer Brent Milligan entrenched in Auckland for the next four days, completing all the duties necessary of a spokesman-cum-manager of a band who are a month away from releasing their debut album. So Monday to Thursdays is divided between overseeing album artwork, making preparations for the next video and a series of interviews with local media. In one memorable encounter, Brent is involved in an on-air spat on bFM with a representative of Max TV over the channel's refusal to playlist the band's 'I Like' video. But it's a much more relaxed affair poolside on the roof of the Regent Hotel. We came up here on the Wednesday looking for a good view and a pint, but couldn't find either. Mind you, we're not anywhere close to being considered the best-dressed people in the

place.

Earlier in the day, the weekly National Singles Sales Chart was released and 'I Like' came in at Number 16. Naturally Brent is rapt, and deservedly so considering the video is getting virtually no airplay.

"I think what has made the single Number 16 on the charts is the fact that we've just done a pumping tour and nailed some wicked gigs. So people are seeing us live and going to buy the tape rather than seeing the video on TV, which is a shame 'cause the video is really funny."

'I Like', Pumpkinhead's ode to Weetbix, *Shortland Street*, and marijuana, was recorded midway through the sessions for the forthcoming album *Sloth*. The band spent three weeks with Christchurch engineer Dave Wernham during June of last year, locked in Phil Rudd's Mountain Studio on the outskirts of Tauranga. Much of *Sloth* was fine-tuned in the studio and several entire songs were born from jams in Mountain's big room. Consequently *Sloth* captures that raw, untamed edge many bands desire to achieve when recording.

"Recording the record was great fun, a real experience for me. I remember sitting in the control room at three in the morning, thinking back to the days of my first band, and being in the practice room with a tape deck and thinking: 'This is it! We're recording our band!' And now there I was, sitting in this studio that's worth nearly a million dollars, being allowed to play with this equipment. It was blowing my mind."

Sloth varies between the melodious grooves of 'Third Eye', 'Erase' and 'Scapegoat', to lumbering metal riffarama on 'Be Sure', and the more hardcore industrial sounds of 'Bateman'. But despite the differing styles, each song retains a similar degree of intensity and desperation in the vocal delivery that gives the record its unique brilliance.

"The singing recorded on *Sloth* is immature, as far as just knowing what the fuck it's all about. I didn't really know what to do, I just sang into the mic. Just before the time we recorded this, I split up with a girlfriend, and it was a really heavy experience. My girlfriend had an affair with my older brother. It was a pretty