



# Deep Sleeper

**S**he sang about dirty sex on 'Delicious'. She made an air hostess uniform look like the sexiest thing on the planet in the 'Vegas' video. She drove one Yank scribe to write: 'She's a tough-talking chick with indie cred' coming out her ass! So, it came as some surprise when I finally got to chat with Louise Wener — Sleeper's sexy lead singer, Brit-pop's outspoken chanteuse — that she was a softly spoken bundle of politeness.

*"We should go to bed till we make each other sore" — 'Delicious'.*

A lot of your interviews turn to sex don't they?

"They do, yes. It's an English hang-up, I think. It's frustrating, really, because when it comes to the album, there was only one song that was explicitly about sex, and there were only a couple of sexual metaphors here and there. You'll do an interview with someone for three hours about all sorts of topics, and when you read it, it's got every quote about sex emblazoned. It's still a hang-up people are titillated by, anything sexual said in a direct way. English 30 year old blokes who write for magazines go: 'Phwoar'."

*"Now it's much too late to ask me where I've been" — 'Inbetween'.*

Here's a brief history. Louise moves from her home town, Ilford, to study English and politics at Manchester University.

"If you do an arts degree in Britain, you only go in for 12 hours a week. That left you with

plenty of time to sort out a band. It just seemed like a thing to do at the time."

She meets Sleeper's guitar player, Jon Stewart. They get it on. Three years pass, as they kick around in other bands, do the dole thing, and battle through shitty jobs. Then they move to London and recruit Diid Osman on bass and Andy Maclure on drums. Sleeper is born.

In late 93, 'Alice in Vain' is released to minor tremors. In February 94, Sleeper release 'Swallow', which makes England's Top 100. Then out comes 'Delicious'. The press erupt over the explicit, shagathon lyrics, and Louise gets a chance to spout off about, well, everything from feminism's pointlessness to wanting more erections in pornography.

By the time 'Inbetween' (their coolly catchy anthem about boring relationships) is released in early 95, they've been all over the press, they've supported Blur and the Manic Street Preachers, and their debut album *Smart* is primed for release. And Louise and Jon have split up.

"It could have gone either way. The band could've split, but we worked through it. There's less tension in the band now than when we were together. Now we're getting on with each other."

But there won't be much difference in the bands creative balance. Louise, as always, writes all the music and lyrics.

"I think you need to have someone who has a strong idea about what it should be like. If you've got four people, all with strong personalities and strong ideas, you can end up being pulled in all different directions and, ultimately,

diluted. You need to have someone to say: 'This is how it should sound,' otherwise you just go round and round for weeks."

There must be pressure on you to keep the hits coming though.

"For me, there was a lot more pressure at the beginning. You get thrust into this thing and you're not sure what the rules are or who's watching, and you get paranoid about what you're doing and insecure. But, as we've gone on, I'm a lot more secure and confident about what we do."

And what are the rules? Don't listen to reviewers. Don't fit into pigeon holes. Do create a stir.

*"I want to see you boxing naked to the death" — 'Lady Love Your Countryside'.*

It used to be that bands wouldn't shut up about how they supported right-on causes and issues and all that sort of carry on. Well, apart from the odd death metallor who preferred a chat about sucking old ladies' entrails out through their eye sockets, but you know what I mean. It'd be Sting and his bloody rain forests, REM and just about everything. Louise's message is simple: Political correctness is a load of old bollocks.

"Because it's a horrible, hypocritical facade, and it's totally useless in changing other people's opinions. I think monitoring language is absurd. If you stop people using racist terms, that won't stop them being racist. The only way is to have a discussion, as far as I can see. People who are into [political correctness] here are boring, liberal, sandal-wearing vegetarians.

They drive me mad."

Do you ever feel you reveal too much about yourself in interviews?


"I like to think I'm quite a private person, really. Maybe it's that I can't be bothered with the whole battle all the time. I think some people do interviews and they're paranoid, thinking: 'Oh, I'd better not say that.' I'd go crazy having to think about that all the time. It's unhealthy. There's more important things to worry about."

*"The way you look reminds me of something" — 'Hunch'.*

The English music press' current fanfare is over Brit-pop. Their approach this time has been different, not because there's less hype or anything (not likely), it's just they haven't had to manufacture the scene. This time they're showing some pride in the bands that have evolved on their own.

"There's a big scene of British bands that are doing really well at the moment. It's a good time to be in a band now. For so long British bands weren't doing very well, the live scene was dying, people weren't going to gigs. And there used to be this whole division between indie bands and everyone else — and no one had heard much about them, or bought them, or listened to them. But the whole thing is really vibrant now. All these bands that used to be the preserve of the indie press are now going into the charts and the Top 20, and that hasn't happened for a long, long time. More people are getting into it."

JOHN TAITE



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