

# "The biggest band in America right now is Hootie and the Blowfish. So, is being a top hit band that important, or is being a real band with real music important?"

So, Billy Corgan is barely a month out of the studio, where he has been holed up continuously for the past 10 and a half months recording the Pumpkins' latest magnum opus, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* (a name eclipsed only in length by that of the 28 song, two-hour plus double album it belongs to), and how is he filling his free time?

"I was just in the studio working on some B-sides."

I've read that you sometimes have a hard time thinking of things to do when you're not in the studio. Is that the case at the moment?

"Umhum. Yeah, I don't really know what to do with myself when I'm not writing."

Now the album's in the can, what are your feelings on it? "Um, I don't have any feelings, so I don't... [chuckles]"

Are you happy with it?

"Yeah, I think it's really good. But I don't really like to talk about my feelings about my records, 'cause it doesn't really seem to matter anyway."

Has there been an improvement in band relations that has contributed to the finished product?

"Umhum, yeah."

What's been responsible for that?

"Growing up."

That must be hard in the public eye.

"Yeah, because people are very judgemental and they don't really understand — and it's not necessarily their responsibility — but people don't necessarily understand the pressures that are placed on people in their mid-20s. Money and expectations, and something you say gets blown out of proportion and everybody's

mad at you. It's nothing you're really used to, but everything's fine."

What has all this media spotlighting taught you?

"Don't talk to the press."

But here you are talking to the press again.

"Well, not as openly as I used to. I used to be of the opinion that as long as I told the truth, that was all that really mattered. I don't think anybody really wants to hear the truth, so I don't really necessarily speak it any more — at least my truth."

But that was such an endearing quality. You used to say if people came down on you for it, it would only make you think less of them.

"Well, you know, the world is not a friendly place. For some reason we find it necessary to, like, beat up on the people who are actually trying to do something in this world. So, whatever, it's just the way it is, but doesn't mean I have to agree with it."

Are the ranks of the Smashing Pumpkins a better place to be these days?

"Well, uh, yes and no. It's really hard to explain it without making it sound trivial, so I don't really know how to explain it."

You've put a readable lyric sheet in with *Mellon Collie*...

"Yeah, it's all typewritten. No handwriting deciphering on this."

Does this mean you're especially pleased with the new set of lyrics?

"Oh, I've always been pleased with my lyrics, but it's just more a matter of how much I wanted to reveal."

What prompted you to write them clearly?

"Because I thought that in the course of a double album, the themes of the album wouldn't hold together if you couldn't really understand what I was singing. I thought it was a lot to ask people to listen to a double record and not really understand where it was coming from lyrically. I felt the lyrics would really help people get their heads around what the album's about."

Do you have faith in people's abilities to get their heads around it?

"Well, I kinda have two opinions on that; one of which is, I think not everybody has to perfectly understand exactly what it is I'm trying to say. It comes across in weird kind of ways, just emotionally. The other side of it is, I think we've kind of shown we're slightly ahead of our time here and there, and just because somebody doesn't get it today doesn't mean it's not relevant."

"I think *Gish* was the kind of album, when it came out, no one really knew what to make of. A lot of people bought it, a lot of people liked it, but critically, people really didn't recognise it as an important album. Now, I think (not only by the bands that are copying us, and basically copying *Gish* era Pumpkins, but also the stylistic changes in music in general) I was in some ways slightly ahead of my time at that point. So, it's like, how important is it that everybody understands it? I don't know."

"It seems like not many people in the media seem to understand our popularity, but the people who listen to us and the people who come to see us play obviously don't have a problem with it. There seems to be a huge discrepancy between

the rock media and the fans. I don't really know what to think about it. All I know is if it's good, people will like it and people will buy it. That's always been the case."

If you build it, they will come.

Would it have made things a lot easier for you if people had realised *Gish* was ahead of its time at the time, instead of realising it now?

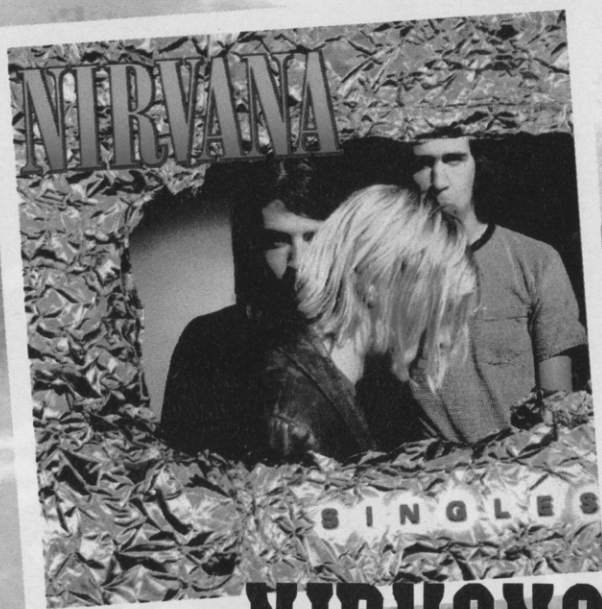
"Well, we also suffered from, like, Nirvanamania, as did a lot of people. I have regrets in some ways about not being recognised, but in other ways I think it's been a good thing, because it's really made us realise what's important. You know, like, the biggest band in America right now is Hootie and the Blowfish. So, is being a top hit band that important, or is being a real band with real music important? I think everything that's happened to us has made us realise what we're doing is more important in the long run than awards and accolades, and things like that. I wish sometimes things had been different, but it is what it is."

Que sera, sera.

At the time of this interview, the Smashing Pumpkins had no plans to tour in support of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. There is supposed to be something in the pipeline, but as they had just cancelled their American tour, because Billy just "didn't feel like it", it's anyone's guess what will happen next. Billy says they are planning on coming to New Zealand, probably in January or February, but I guess we'll just have to wait and see if that transpires.

Billy laughs: "With me, you never know."

BRONWYN TRUDGEON



## Singles NIRVANA Box Set

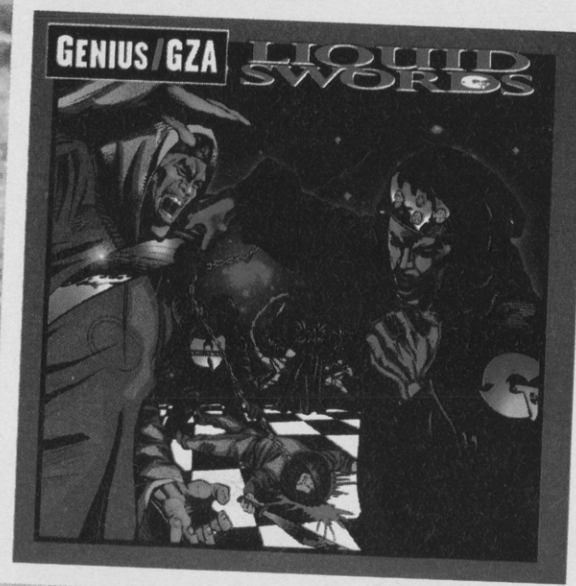
This collectors' box set includes the six European CD singles — 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', 'Come As You Are', 'Heart Shaped Box', 'In Bloom', 'Lithium' and 'All Apologies' with 13 B-side tracks (11 of which are non-LP songs or live versions). *Singles* is priced at an accessible low price and contains all the lyrics to the songs on *Nevermind*.

## SONIC YOUTH Washing Machine

Sonic Youth's new album is looser and jammier than their last album and it is recorded in Memphis at Easley Recording — "cheap, the kind of old room we were looking for," says Steve Shelley. *Washing Machine* is barbecue fueled to a great extent," says Kim Gordon. "Lots of songs on the album are about eating pork sandwiches with mustard coleslaw." This album shows a band going places people can't even imagine.



## GENIUS / GZA Liquid Swords



## GENIUS / GZA Liquid Swords

The main man from the Wu-Tang Clan here drops his solo album, a powerful slice of realness and clever wordplay that's sure to establish the Genius/GZA as one of rap's premiere visionaries. *Liquid Swords* is a continuation of the Wu-Tang style. Cousin RZA produces. "The Wu is the way, the Tang is the slang, the clan — that's the family," says GZA. 'Liquid Swords/Labels' is the defiant first single.

