



Freak Power (L-R) Shirley, Lance, Paul, Marty, Jules.

PHOTOS BY DARRYL WARD

# BIG DUMB SCUM ROCK

Are they a punk rock band? Are they a sub Sub-Pop band? Are they scum rock? They're all this and more — they're FREAK POWER!!! Formerly known as the Osterbergs, Freak Power are like a comic book grunge metal band with a sense of humour, which doesn't detract from their innate heaviness, cos this band are currently laying down some of the messiest, grungiest, rutting-est riffs you'll hear this side of Seattle.

The band members are Lance on guitar (also drums in SPUD), Paul on vocals, Mark on guitar, Jules on bass (also in Second Child) and Shirley on drums, a miniature dynamo who doesn't hesitate to pull the beat on

the boys when they start riffing out and who has been known to stagger off stage with her fingers bleeding, such is her dedication! So far Freak Power have played support to the Cramps and

Mudhoney and they're "almost" signed to Wildside. Their philosophy is "get loaded and fall over". Their motto? "Controlled chaos". We meet after rehearsal one Tuesday night in the Occidental. All except Lance, who stayed home to watch *Twin Peaks*. But you've read about him in enough SPUD interviews anyway. Were you pleased with your gig at the Gluepot the other night?

Jules: Yeah, it could've been a better crowd but there was a lot on that weekend. Paul: I thought it was shiitot. That's probably the best we've been. What was that you were saying about gerbils? Paul: In joke, you know, kills the boredom.

How come you guys went from sounding sub-Stooges to Sub-Pop? Was it the t-shirts or what?

Paul: There wasn't anything around when we first started. The good bands were like Radio Birdman, the Stooges, there was fuck all else really.

How come you haven't been sucked in by 80s stuff?

Paul: Because it sucks, man, Joy Division ...

Jules: Most of the good bands in the 80s looked back to the 60s and 70s for influence. There's nothing really that new except for crossover music like Faith No More, biggest gimmick to come out of the early 90s.

Do you get sick of Sub-Pop comparisons?

Paul: I don't know, it's better than being compared to Fleetwood Mac or fuckin' Suicidal Tendencies or something like that. Not that there's anything wrong with Fleetwood Mac.

Mark: Our music was heading that

way before we even started listening to that stuff about a year and a half ago. With Lance in the band and two guitars we started moving from more of a trebly white noise sound to a heavy metal, bottom end, grungy sound and we started doing that before the first thing we heard from Sub-Pop which was Mudhoney. We heard that and we thought 'wow, we can relate to that' and that's why we started listening to that stuff, 'cos it sounded like what we were doing anyway. Did you hang out with Mudhoney when they were here?

Mark: They came back to our house, we had a party after the first night. Shirley: They were really friendly, weren't they?

Jules: Just like us really.

Do you consider yourselves an American band?

Paul: The best music comes out of America.

Mark: I can't say we're influenced by things from anywhere else. I hate English music.

Are the 60s a source of inspiration?

Paul: No man, you just like the look of a record and go 'that's cool, buy that'. I don't really give a shit about the 60s.

What about other cultural influences, like reading?

Jules: *Twin Peaks*, man, never miss it.

Mark: I saw the movie *Mudhoney* the other day. That was really good.

And what's the other one — ?

Jules: Soundgarden?

Mark: Faster Pussycat.

What about inter-personal band dynamics. Are you guys quite hard to get along with?

Paul: No, we've got lots of friends. They all just hate our music. Or they say they're our friends, but when they walk away ...

Wasn't Jules out of the band for a while?

Shirley: That was our fuckup.

Jules: We just sort of drifted apart for a while, we weren't playing very often, there wasn't much communication going on.

Paul: Basically Jules' hair wasn't long enough.

Do Freak Power have a master

plan?

Mark: We're not dreaming, you've just got to let things happen. It's all very well saying 'oh yeah, we've gotta be superstars within two years'. You just get disillusioned if you think you're going to make it so you just keep playing along in the hope some breaks come along. It must be good to know you're not being ignored.

Paul: There's about six or seven bands in Auckland that can actually hope to put out a record. There's millions of bands that are just fucking around. Lots of people you talk to are going 'let's put a record out' and that sort of shit and then next week they've broken up.

How do you guys manage to sound tight and loose at the same time on stage? What sort of state do you like to be in to play?

Paul: Straight.

Jules: Mildly drunk. I like to be quite out of it. It depends what kind of a gig it is. If it's a really important gig I will only drink five cans of beer.

And finally, who are some of your musical heroes?

Paul: Jules' is Ace Frehley.

Jules: Grand Funk Railway.

Paul: What a turkey!

Jules: Bitchin' man — some of their riffs are really heavy. Have you heard their vocals?

Paul: Nazareth, Jethro Tull, Guns'n'Roses ...

Mark: Mother Love Bone, Alice In Chains, the Doors ...

Shirley: Jane's Addiction, Soundgarden ...

And on that note we called it a night as the barman cleared away our glasses and turfed us into Vulcan Lane. If you haven't already seen Freak Power you're missing out. If you like things short and sharp (they like to play 30 minute sets else they get bored) with an air of unpredictability (Lance wielding an axe), big dumb riffs, heavy and messy, with a lead singer who is not afraid to strut the stage and throw his clothes into the crowd, then Freak Power just might be your kind of band too.

DONNA YUZWALK

## GRANTS AWARDED

The NZ Arts Council Recording Panel has selected five projects from a total of 36 entries. These five artists receive a \$5000 grant to record and promote an EP via an Enzed indie label.

Hallelujah Picassos, Auckland, Pagan.

Jane & the Magick Heads, Dunedin, Flying Nun. Nemesis Dub Systems, Auckland, Southside. Lisa Ngawaka, Wellington, Tribal. Olla, Auckland, Flying Nun.

Grants are made twice a year. The next closing date for applications is September 30.

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