

Some *weird* shit here, fans, as THE PIXIES attempt to explain themselves and (opposite page) their new album to our elflike HELEN MEAD. Pics by the Troll-like KEVIN CUMMINS.

TALKING WITH THE ANIMALS

Hil Sit down. Can you tell me who all these people are?" I look round the hotel lounge expecting to have to identify various members of Johnny Diesel and The Injectors, only to find a postcard of Fergie and Andy's Royal Wedding shoved into my mitts. "So who's who?"

Kim Deal is perfumed with coconut oil. It's the first thing you notice about her, the smell of constant sunshine. Her curling dark hair is tied back in a pigtail and she wears the lightest application of make-up over finely tuned cheekbones. But her hands look wrong. Too delicate to throttle out the choking bass that pumps away at the heart of the Pixies' powerful noise.

The Pixies are well versed in the art of deception. Their children are always revealed as gremlins when you pull them from their suckling clothes: sweet, jubilant tunes coasting on the backs of porcupine barbed lyrics. They'll always leave you with a hole in your heart.

'Doolittle' is no different, but better. In learning to walk, talk and jive with the animals the Pixies have tamed the beast that lies between civilised and barbaric nature, made their beds and bounced off them.

In the course of the album's 15 tracks the Pixies change their spots more often than a cat has lives. The camouflage covers them well in any environment, taking them from guitars screeching under the pain of the dentists drill to the audio-video nasty 'Debaser', to the Archies' 'Sugar Sugar' melody in 'Here Come Your Man'.

It's fun, it's meant to be. They'll insist it's just good old fashioned rock 'n' roll.

Sorry I'm late, I've been darned my underwear," announces Charles, alias Black Francis, as he comes lolloping across the room and pulls up a chair. Like your favourite cuddly teddy bear, he slouches into the upholstery and spreads himself out so that his tummy is straining against the buttons of his red plaid shirt.

"I enjoy it, it's really relaxing," Charles continues. I seriously doubt his sanity and resolve to treat him to visits to Knickerbox and Sock Shop before he develops sewingwoman's elbow or some other dastardly affliction.

In all the Pixies are four. Joining Kim and Charles are drummer Dave Lovering, who's just graduated from charm school, and "The baby of the band" Joey Santiago, a guitarist with nerves so frayed you'd have thought a plectrum had ripped them open.

Just under a year ago The Pixies were supporting Throwing Muses at the Mean Fiddler, today they start a three month tour which culminates at the Kilburn National Ballroom in July. They're becoming stars, complete with overdrafts.

The self-proclaimed "dictator of the band" Charles introduces himself first: "Black Francis, 23 years, 24 years old this week. Musician. Born Boston Mass. Grew up Los Angeles California." This is all he wants to reveal of himself to you. I can add that he's intolerant until he gets onto his 20th Drambuie, very sharp and too dry to belly laugh.

"Urrh! Dave Lovering, 27, too old. Old like another woman in the band. Born in Massachusetts. An electronic engineer before this. And a skateboarder, that sounds good."

What, professionally?

"No. Just fooling around. And fell off many times."

Did you break anything?

"Kinda my hip and kinda my elbow." Does this mean you've got a limp? "No, just that in damp weather it doesn't work too well. But I don't let it bother me." Dave's career could obviously be impaired by arthritis if he doesn't wrap up warm.

"My name is Kim Deal. It used to be Kim Murphy but now I've got a divorce so I'm going back to my maiden name. Now I go by Kim Deal. That's D-E-A-L. As in let's make a deal. I'm 27, but don't print it, because it's too old, and I don't want anyone to know. I grew up in Dayton, Ohio. It's Midwest, lots of corn and . . . cows. My dad's a physicist and my mum's a nursery school teacher . . ."

"A physicist. I didn't know that. Shit, SHIT," comments Dave.

"He only says that to everybody," counters Kim. "He manages engineers. I was brought up to be a good girl. I moved to Boston three years ago to get married. I moved there February and I answered an add in the paper that asked for a bass player, something along the lines of Peter Paul and Mary and Husker Du. And that's why I answered it, I thought it sounded interesting."

So what did your husband feel about all this? "He liked it. He thought it was cool hanging out with a band. You know what I mean."

Was he a bit of a ligger then?

the long silence," volunteers Joey, "yes."

"Well, we just don't hang out much when we're not on tour or in the studio," admits Charles.

"I hate them all," says Kim, and I think she's joking. "They just keep following me around wherever I go."

It's Boston or bust as far as the Pixies are concerned. They say they just wouldn't be around if it wasn't for their adopted hometown—that artistically they couldn't exist elsewhere, especially a place like New York. So what's so special about it?

"Well, it's expensive," says Kim. "If it wasn't for my husband I couldn't afford to live there. It's not as disgusting and slimy as New York is."

"It's more cultural too I think," says Dave trying to get back on the tracks.

"You think so," sneers Kim. "New York's got all that . . . shit."

So how do you see The Pixies?

"Well it's great to see the world," says Dave. "Especially here and Amsterdam. You can buy everything you want there pretty much: diamonds, hash, women, and they have good breakfasts too. Everything's so out in the open there that nothing tends to get as abused."

"I think we're a very dynamic band," says Charles. "Not in the traditional sense of the word. We're loud and we're soft, we're up and down, we have a lot of

A lot of the images in 'Surfer Rosa' were of physical objects being broken down, have you ever had a physical or nervous breakdown?

"No, it's just been a sorta low level constant nervous breakdown. These past five or six years maybe. I live too safe a life, there's not enough dramatic things that happen for me to have a complete breakdown," says Charles, trundling off towards the bar again for another triple Drambuie.

Would you like to travel in time?

"That would make my life complete if I could have a time machine," says Charles, back from the bar. "I think I'd like to be a big fat feudal lord with everything at my beck and call. I'd have all my dogs and maidens around me and I'd stink. If I had a time machine I could enjoy it for a little while and get the hell out, right?"

"We didn't say that," Kim.

How about the future?

"I don't even know if there is a future," says Charles. "I know there's a past. I'm drunk. Dr Who, seven o'clock every night in my father's household, my brother's a fanatic."

"Well I've been watching Monty Python since the age of eight and everything in England looks like something out of one of their sketches. I can't get over it," gasps Dave.

"I thought everybody in England talked like this," screeched Kim doing

Joey: "There was a guy in Ireland obsessed with pixies, convinced that they did exist. Steve Albini told us this guy spent all his life trying to prove it."

"There are mythological definitions and descriptions of what a pixie is supposed to look like and exactly where he's from. A certain portion of England, round a certain river, round a certain town, all that. An area of Central England near Wales actually," says Charles who's starting to sound like an impatient history teacher.

Where did the name Pixies come from?

"I just picked it out of the dictionary, that's all," explains Joey. "I'd never stereotyped the meaning. I just went by the dictionary: 'mischievous little elf'. Little did I know it had innuendos for a fag or gay person. I was totally innocent of that."

Is there anything you would like to achieve before you die?

"Yeah I'd like to go to Bavaria. I just want to get shit-faced with an umpah band" confesses Dave.

"I'd like to go on a midnight mission to the Galapagos Islands and drop dogs over there. Create a real mystery you know: 'How did these puppies come to be here? Oh my God!'" giggles Joey.

What are your regrets in life. Is there anything you'd change?

"I was trying out for cheerleader—don't laugh I'm very sensitive about this," rebuffs Kim. "I was going to try out as a warrior, that's when you get to dress up like an Indian. So then it came to Shea Wilson, cute little Shea Wilson, everyone lurved Shea Wilson, she did a back flip and that was what I was going to do. But I chickened out . . ."

Charles: "It's not one of my greatest regrets, because if it was I wouldn't tell you because you're a journalist. I had my choice of going to Boston to start this band or taking a boat to the South Pacific and watching Haley's Comet go over New Zealand. And now I won't be able to see Haley's Comet. I'll be so old, if I'm alive, when it comes by again that I won't be able to see it anyway. I missed the astrological event of the century."

Kim: ". . . But you see she couldn't even do good backflips . . ."

"I was a quarterback," says Joey, obviously feeling left out. "I was in the high school band," joins in Dave. "I played bass drum in the marching band and the big band, but I was so small that the local paper printed this picture on the front f—ing page captioned 'the tall and the short of it', with me surrounded by all these other drummers who were four feet taller than me."

"If I could be anybody I'd be Dr Doolittle and talk to the animals. We'd just shoot the shit," slurs Charles.

Don't you think you might find animals are completely dumb, acting on instinct only?

"I must admit I sometimes wonder when I can keep a cat entranced for an hour just by shining a flashlight at it. Mind you they say Captain Beefheart listens to the trees screaming."

"This kinda reminds me of *The Dating Game*, pipes up Kim. "Somebody sitting down and asking questions and listening to the answers—you know 'Contestant number two . . .'"

"So who do you want to go out with Helen?" asks Joey.

"Maybe it's just hearing a female voice asking the questions and three men answering."

Kim proceeds to pull out three chairs into the middle of the bar and manages to act out the American version of *Blind Date*.

"Contestant number one, if you had to say something very special to a girl what's the first thing you'd say?"

"Bachelor One, trying to be cute and smug so the girl would think he was a cool dude: 'Well hey darling, where have you been all my life?'" Boston?



"No. I don't think he's got high even. Drunk a couple of times but he's never taken drugs."

So do you feel better without him?

"I don't know. It's too soon, I think. Yes in ways and no in ways."

"Joey Santiago. I was born in Manila. 23." This is the longest sentence he strings together for half an hour. His first memory is "falling down the stairs on my tricycle in Manila. Evel Knievel was really popular at the time. There was a gate that mother used to put on the stairwell and it was open that time. And I just went for it all the way."

"I came from a typical Filipino home. My father is a doctor and he wanted us to move to America so we'd be better educated and have better opportunities." Together with Charles he studied at Amherst University, reading economics until he threw away the statistics to join the Pixies. Now he'd quite like to take an evening course in painting or pottery "for fun".

Kim keeps pumping him for more details: "Will you ever go back to school to finish your degree? Did you fit in? Were you a popular student?" You start to get the feeling that the Pixies don't actually spend that much time in each other's company.

How do your personalities mesh? Do you get on each others nerves?

"Well, as you may have guessed by

space in our music. It's not very sophisticated music, it's very direct and straightforward."

Do you write separately from the Pixies?

"No, I don't even write a Pixies' song in a notebook unless someone else has to read them. I don't read books, keep a diary, write letters or postcards. I watch TV or go to the movies."

So why do you write lyrics at all. Why don't you just express yourself through your guitar?

"I want to make cool rock songs. And one of the main components of a cool rock and roll album is the lyrics. I'm not saying there's no inspiration, I'm just saying that I'm no literary giant or anything like that. Hopefully I will be considered a literary giant in 10 years time if we get that big and people want to talk about it that much."

"Or if you die," notes Joey.

"Oh, if I die it's guaranteed."

Are you likely to die in the next few years?

"Oh no, certainly not. I'm going to be very, very old when I die. Ideally I'd like to be taken away in a space ship like in *Cocoon*. I hope I never die. I just want to carry on making our music in Dave's dad's garage. He's a signwriter and his workshop is where the magic happens."

"I'm 27 but don't print it because it's too old." — KIM

an American impersonating a Python impersonating an Englishwoman.

"I spent six months on an archaeological dig in Arizona one summer," says Charles skipping back to the past. "I was working at a village that was eight or nine hundred years old uncovering some burials. Anyway you suck a lot of the things you pull out of the ground. Stones and things to clean them off. It's the quickest way to get to look at something small."

"I did it with a deer bone once and I remembered you're not supposed to do that because I'd heard of people dying from a strange mould that grows on bones, human bones for example, after they'd been exposed to it in a direct way. So after sucking the deer bone I thought I was going to die for a couple of hours. But the rest of the time on a dig it's very slow and tedious. There's very few surprises. I'm not going to spend my life trying to find the ark or Atlantis or something."

Let a Pixies lyric stagnate for too long in your brain and your neighbours are likely to think you're a touch perverse. Learn a whole verse and you'll be exorcised for speaking in tongues.

Too lazy to write them down, Black Francis committed their lyrics to their previous two albums. 'Surfer Rosa' and 'Come On Pilgrim', to memory. Leaving the Pixies often interpreted as many things they aren't.

With 'Doolittle', their new album on 4AD, the confusion should roll to a halt. For included with the first 30,000 copies is a fully illustrated lyric book that filanny tells the story as it is.

Guiding you through the booklet song by song Black Francis explains just how his obsessions with Dr Doolittle, gorged eyeballs, the ozone layer and the Old Testament become folklore.

'Debaser'

"There's a chord progression, that's the first thing. Then a word or a phrase at the most. Then a topic evolves around that. I thought of Un Chien Andalou ('30s surrealist film by Salvador Dali) and I thought an arty French movie was an equally dumb thing to write a song about.

"Debaser fitted well because at the time of the movie the Parisiens were ripping up their seats in the theatres because of another film and the point of Un Chien Andalou was to debase morality. To debase standards of art. The classic film school shot is the razor slicing across the eyeball. Eyes are the main way people communicate, you can hold unspoken conversations. I guess that it's the most important part of your body unless you're talking to a blind person."

'Tame'

"I don't want to sound like a male chauvinist, but I have a male perspective, because I am male. 'Tame' is about women more than men. But the way some men treat their hair it's incredible and I can understand all that deodorant and stuff. I've never related to it. My family's rather spartan.

"It's about putting all that time into sexual presentation, I don't mean it in a dirty kind of way. Where I live in the city women spend time presenting themselves and still come out forever bland and very mediocre."

'I Bleed'

"In the first two verses there's no topic whatsoever all this is just a rhyme

The Pixies (from left): Kim, Dave, Joey and Black Francis

structured AABCBDD. It's all very automatic. The rest is about Arizona. There's a very famous cliff dwelling there. With two or three storey houses about a mile up inside these cliffs. It's about nine hundred years old and you can still see the hand prints from the people who pressed the plaster onto the walls. And you can take your hand and place it in the print and it's very wooh."

'Wave Of Mutilation'

"Mostly I try to stick with more physical imagery just because it's more tangible mentally, than he or she or it, like 'Little Red Corvette'.

"This first line is a joke on The Beach Boys and Charles Manson. They hung out together and all that. And he wrote this song called 'Cease To Exist'. And supposedly the Beach Boys used a lot of his lyrics and gave him a sports car or something. And they had this boy loves girl song where they went 'Cease to resist' and changed his lyrics around, they couldn't have 'Cease to exist' because it was all powerful suicidal stuff! He's just some glorified charismatic figure like Hitler, he does say interesting things, he's a result of something but I don't know what."

'Here Comes Your Man'

"This is a pre Pixies song that I wrote when I was about 15. It's about winos and hobos travelling on the trains who died in the great California earthquake. Before earthquakes everything gets very calm, animals stop talking and birds stop chirping and there's no winds, it's very ominous.

"I've been through a few earthquakes actually 'cos I grew up in California. I was only in one big one in 1971, I was very young, and I slept through it. I've been awake through lots of small ones at school and at home. It's very exciting actually, a very comical thing, it's like the earth is shaking and what can you do? Nothing."

'Dead'

This is the story of David and Bathsheba of the Old Testament. King David was on his rooftop one night-time watching a woman bathing in the nude and he was aroused, I guess. Anyway he sent some men after her and I don't know whether it was rape or a seduction, but she became pregnant. So David arranged for Uriah, her husband, who was a soldier in his army, to be sent to the battle front on a suicide mission. So 'Dead' is a metaphor for sex

reduced to the most basic, ugly, bad lust with equally ugly results.

'Monkey Gone To Heaven'

"This monkey's gone to heaven' is not connected with the rest of the song at all, it was the working lyric and we couldn't come up with anything better.

"I'm really not trying to address any issue: the sky and the ocean are both very ancient, spiritual and mythological places. And I'm just trying to talk about them in surreal kinds of ways: there's a hole in the ozone layer scientifically, but the unreal side is that there's a hole in the sky and the sky means a lot of things and has a lot of implications to lots of people in different cultures in past, present and future, right? Like the man dying from the sludge in the water in New Jersey, is just me getting mythological again, it's Neptune that I picture dying from the pollution.

'Mr Grieves'

"It's about the end of the world I guess. Mr Grieves is the Death character of mythology. The 'man in the middle' is Dr Doolittle, because if you could speak to the animals you would be the great link between mankind and the animal world. There's this theory that if not smarter than us, animals are aware of what's going on and if we could communicate with them they could give us the answer of the future and make everything okay. But I'm assuming that a nuclear winter will mean that Mr Grieves is going to win in the end."

'Crackity Jones'

"Jones Jones is a room mate I had in Puerto Rico. I lived in this men's dorm that was half homosexual and I had this really crazy drug addict psycho weirdo guy to share with and this is all about him.

"I would be speaking to him in Spanish so everything would be a little vague to me and he kept on talking on and on about Paco Picopiedra and La Muneca, I couldn't work out what he was talking about and it was Fred Flintstone!"

'La La Love You':

"There's no love in here. Not a drop. I've never written a love song. It's just like an abstract sort of joke 'La la love you don't mean maybe', it's just

CONTINUED PAGE 49



PIXIES

FROM PAGE 45

mimicking a really bad 1950's song or maybe I should say 1980's. 'First base/Second base/Third base/Home run' is a very Shakespearian crass joke in America, a crude joke for full copulation. I'm just being as minimalist as I can, but it conjures up lots of images – well one image I should say."

'Number 13 Baby':

"This is a collage of images of when I was growing up in Los Angeles. Number 13 traditionally means bad luck, but in America especially in the '60s among bikers and chicanos the number 13 is the thirteenth letter of the alphabet: M for marijuana.

"It's a really goofy sub culture, but it's kinda funny, and even today you can see sprayed on the walls 'The Meter Boys Number 13'. So this is about a Mexican girl and a Samoan girl, a boyish, sexual, adolescent collage of Southern Californian living."

'There Goes My Gun'

"There's nothing to this apart from that one line. It's the hook right? It's the chorus. I could have written a verse but it sounded cool without the lyrics so it's much more effective and theatrical. These are just popular phrases I would associate with having a gun, 'Looka me' because it's a position of power. I don't own a gun, I'm afraid of them.

"People keep asking me is this some sort of phallic symbol, you know 'There goes my gun', an orgasm, I mean I suppose that could be true but I get the impression that in the literary world anything that is taller than it is wide is a phallic, you know what I mean? I'm just talking about guns I guess. I just want to make a cool rock 'n' roll song."

'Hey':

"It's a relationship song about two classic sad figures. Myself or maybe not myself. Uh is the sound of sex and also the sound of childbirth. I dunno I'm just sorta sad about how sex goes the wrong way in a very basic sort of way and how it also results in very amazing things like childbirth and stuff."

'Silver':

"This is a song me and Kim wrote really fast one night sitting around bored in the studio waiting for whtaever to happen with the engineers. There were other lyrics that were supposed to have been written for the actual song but all we'd got left were the original phrases that we came up with so that was that."

'Gouge Away':

"Yeah you've got it in one. It's the story of Samson and Delilah, you're the first person that's actually realised probably because the song doesn't actually mention Samson or Delilah. It's a sort of sex story: Delilah shoes up as a secret spy of the Philistines and has an affair with Sampson. I don't know what he was getting out of it. But enough sex and drugs and relaxation to give up his secrets. Maybe he loved her, I dunno. But they gouged his eyes out in the end."