

# THE GUT, THE BET AND THE UGLY

**BELLY**  
**BETTIE SERVEERT**  
LEICESTER PRINCESS  
CHARLOTTE

AT A time when traditional, boys-with-guitars indie rock has stagnated, it is sorely tempting to see Belly and Bettie Serveert's combined brilliance as proof for some premature theory about women producing the only exciting new music in 1992. But, for now, we'd do better to enjoy them on their own terms.

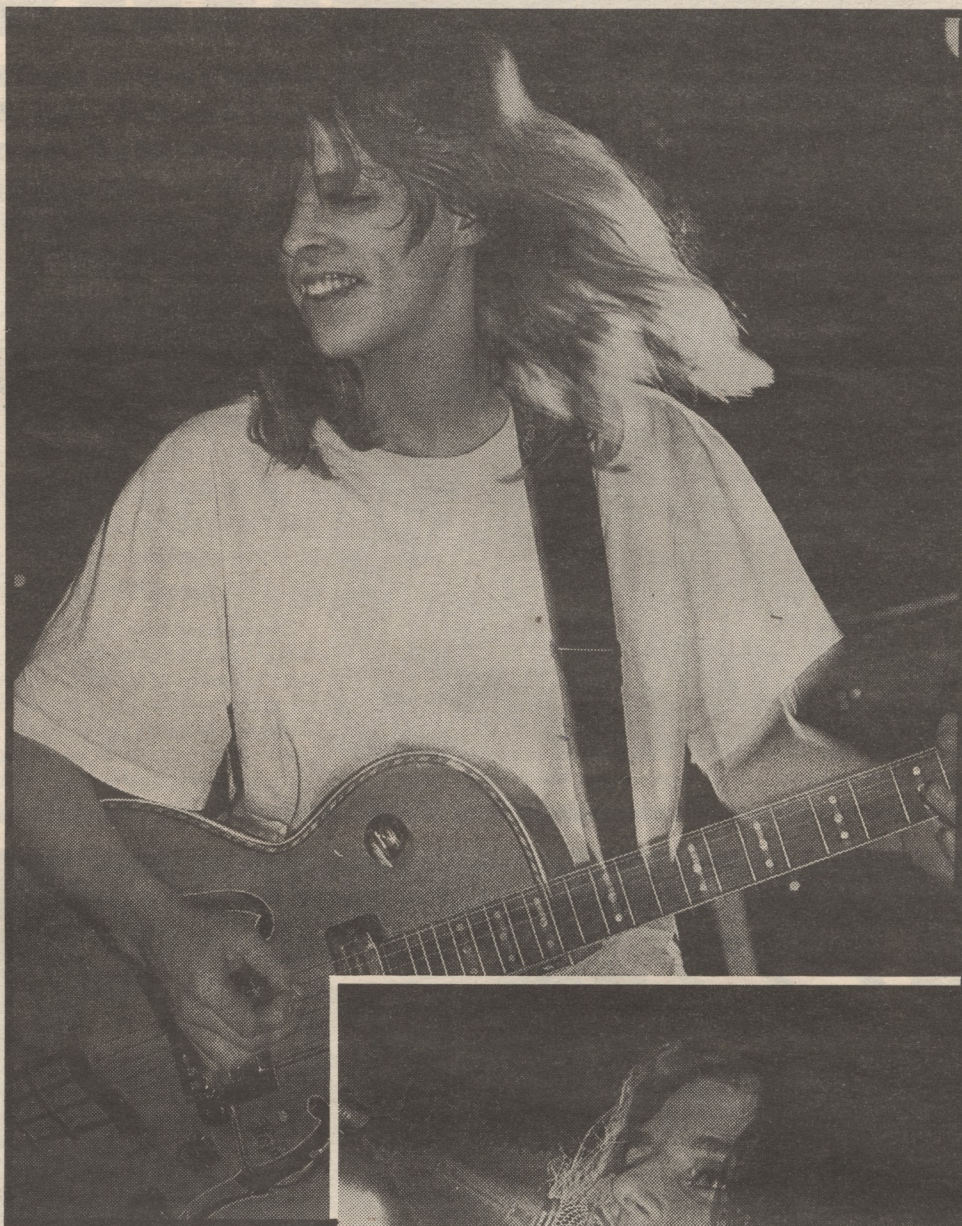
Bettie Serveert achieve the considerable feat of playing American-style indie rock with more style, passion and emotional resonance than most of their apparent mentors . . . despite being Dutch.

Their greatest asset is undoubtedly Carol Van Dijk's voice, a piercingly emotional combination of Patti Smith and Janis Joplin which can swim through your body like ice cubes. Then there are the lyrics, which touch on such delicate subjects as child abuse without ever sounding simplistic or part of some 'woman-as-victim' stereotype. Meanwhile, the tortuous squeals, grunts and groans of guitars spin around in dazed fits of self-immolation. It's a supremely seamless hybrid of late '60s American underground, new wave and grunge, but with gorgeously melancholic overtones, and if there's any justice in this world, their album, 'Palomine', will shoot up the indie charts.

Equally, if anyone remains unconvinced that Belly are a great new band in their own right rather than Tanya Donelly's ill-advised ego outing, the 13 songs played tonight conspire to splatter egg over cynical faces.

Highlights are 'Dusted' and 'Slow Dog' from the debut EP — twisted, awkward, thrashy songs with marvellously lop-sided hooks and chunky, obtuse riffs throughout; pure pop harmonies one minute and oblique, ethereal cooing the next. Tanya sings about a heroin-addicted rape victim, a woman with a decomposing dog strapped to her back, love, loss, and filthy, horny sex with a voice so sweet at times that it's ridiculous, but always totally riveting.

Naturally, Belly make more immediately accessible music than Throwing Muses, but they're just as intriguing, confusing, original and above all, utterly sublime because both Tanya and Kristin Hersh are heartfelt, eccentric misfits in a



***You Bettie, you Belly — you bet! The piercingly emotional and very Dutch Carol Serveert (above) and ex-Muse Tanya Donelly, world champion smiler (right).***

world full of calculating conformists.

Tanya encores with a solo acoustic version of 'Sweet Ride', and flashes her world championship smile in embarrassed amusement at the wildly enthusiastic reception it gets. Finally, she wickedly drops back down to earth with a thrash through Tom Jones' 'It's Not Unusual', complete with mad cock-rock guitar solo.

Belly and Bettie Serveert — two of many damn good reasons to look forward to 1993.

Johnny Cigarettes

