



DUTCH ELVIS DISEASE

PIXIES UTRECHT MUSIK CENTRUM

BUSTS OF what look like former Doctor Who's line the walls. Attractive modern wooden tables and chairs are occupied by security men who are reading paperback novels. This is Utrecht's main venue and it is quite civilised.

In a corner, the Pixies sit about, drinking creamy beetroot soup and looking cheerful because their European tour is a mega success. Here's the man they call Black Francis, Charles to you and me. Hi, Charles, how are you doing?

"Great!" he roars at Kevin Cummins. "Loadsamoney! Hey, my mom's here, you should talk to her!"

We join Charles for creamy beetroot soup. Charles is in a rocking mood. He is on the cover of a Dutch mag where he proclaims, "I am the Pixies" and he likes it here. Before the tour, Charles took a six-month European holiday on the back of some radio interviews. "I'm all Europed out now, though!" he sighs.

We talk of England. "I was in Manchester," he reveals expansively. "I saw these squatters play a gig in a field and they were incredible! They were like this punk band, but they were also like this joke idea of a punk band! They were like..."

Words fail him. He jumps up and bounces around the table, waving his arms and screaming wordlessly. Meanwhile, support band The Pale Saints have put on their Gary Glitter CD in the main hall so Kevin and I run away.

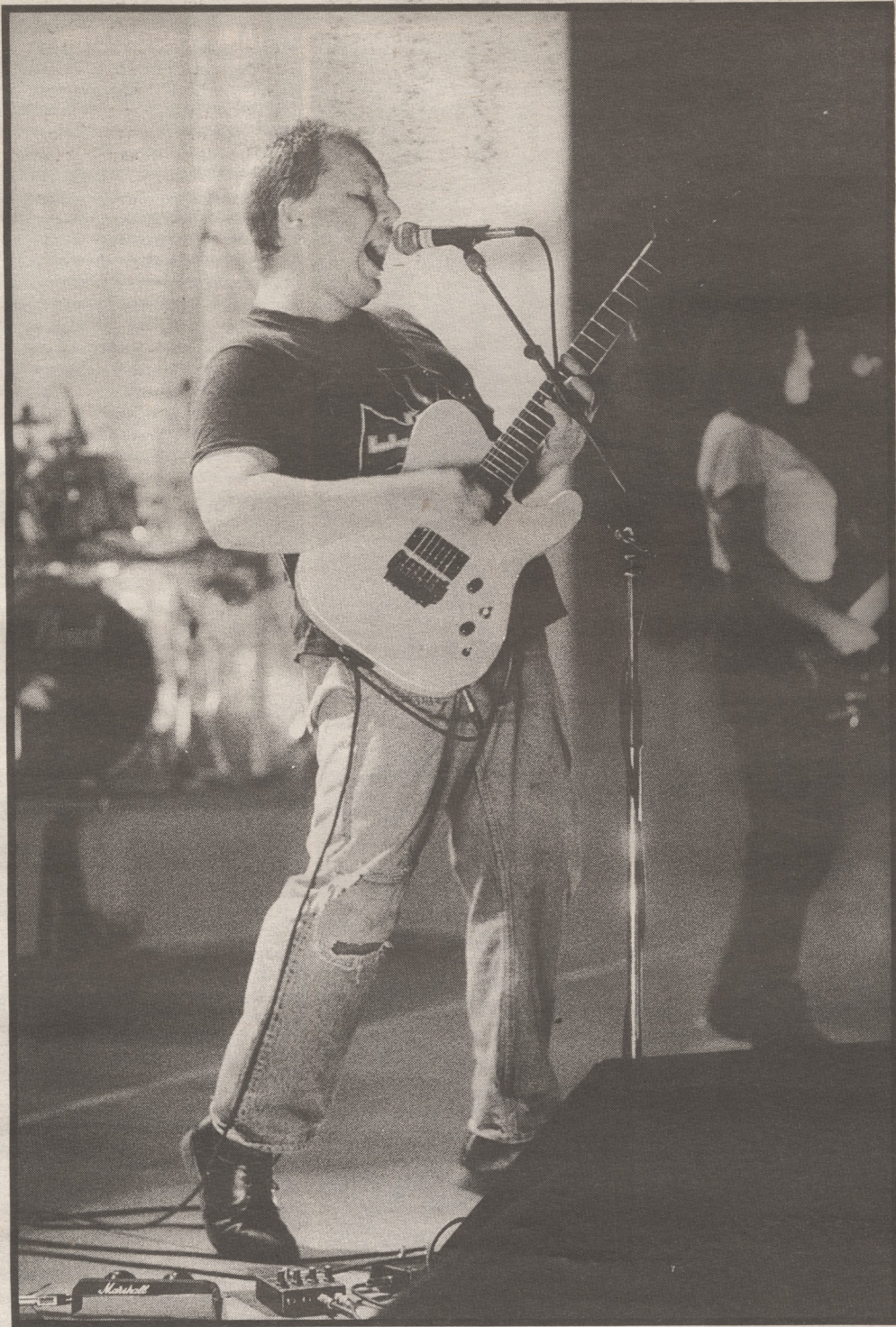
We return as the Pixies take the stage. The auditorium is heaving with mad people. Some are smoking what appear to be old tyres. Some are wearing vile Turkish shawls. Most look like gig-goers anywhere and are clad head to toe in Pixies' merchandising. Suddenly the surf hell that is 'Cecilia Anne' wells up from behind the black stage curtain, it falls down—whamski! Here are the Pixies.

Drummer David lurks in a corner on a podium, guitarist Joey is trying to slice his hand off on his own strings, bassist Kim is looking fairly normal so far and Charles is just waving his guitar and screaming wordlessly. 'Elevator Lady' commences in a river of electric thump juice. Dutch punters tumble through the air. This is a veritable rock tempest.

'Debaser', 'Hang Wire', 'Monkey'... the hits just keep on coming, mostly delivered at unknown speeds with major intensity. Charles begins to look like the proverbial chubby schoolboy in a playground hell. Kim addresses the mic. "Now we're in F," she informs us. Indeed we are; this is 'Velouria' and it is a pop mammoth.

I take time to note the huge amount of pop in the Pixies, great hidden harmonies and hooks stuck willy-nilly to the migraine commando noise tunes. Everybody else just jumps up and down and shouts. 'Gigantic' unites a continent and slides of planets are displayed.

A quick trip to the bar reveals part of the reason for local joy.



Black Dwarf

Last week Utrecht had Deacon Blue, The Hothouse Flowers and Barclay James Harvest. Clearly the Pixies are playing to a city that believed itself lost forever to popular music. And the popular music on stage is like no other; very few groups can mash in the heavy psychotic hell lyrics and angst riffing without turning into a slop bucket of grunge, and even less can take on several decades of pop without losing their minds or senses of propriety. The Pixies have no problem with either of these things. 'Stormy Weather' sounds like The Jesus and Mary Chain *think* they sound. 'Diggin' Fire' sounds like a cheerful chat in Hell.

Kim, who for some time has been doing very rock 'n' roll bass player strolling, engages us in cheerful chat. "The next song's a

pop song," she declares, then adds for the benefit of some Dutch human pyramids, "You guys be careful—don't fall!" Then, encouraged by this success with the crowd, she announces, "We played Belgium yesterday." This goes down in complete silence. "And we're playing here tomorrow," says Kim, desperately.

The audience are more impressed with this but Kim has run out of conversation and so the Pixies jig their way through 'Here Comes Your Man' which is almost certainly a pop song. One trusts they liked it in Belgium.

They thunder on. I have a little rest because this is almost a two-hour show and return to witness the unsurpassable joy of 'Caribou'. Then Kim's bass loses its life. Undeterred, Joey, who

still—amazingly—has all of his fingers, plays 'Apache'. The crowd go Shadows mental. Finally, thanks to the Pixies not actually knowing large parts of 'Apache', the tune vivisections itself and we return to normality.

Songs hurtle by like bricks in danger. A nation roared to 'Allison', 'Wave Of Mutilation', 'All Over The World', and, natcho, 'Havalina'. Finally the Pixies depart, come back and do ten seconds of 'Wave' again and the town spills itself onto the pavements. Me and Kevin go off and eat the band's crisps.

Here's Charles again, temporarily away from his mum, who is off hanging five with the road crew. Charles, not unsurprisingly, has delighted in the whole occasion. "I used to hate it when people chanted along with the songs," he drawls cheerfully. "Especially when it was 'You are the son of a mother—er'. I used to hate that. But now I take it as an indication that people like us, especially

when you see a sea of 15-year-olds chanting with every song.

"I like to feel that people actually like it, rather than we're hype," he beams. "Our sheer gravity just sucks 'em in, ha ha."

The Pixies appear to have a universal appeal to all nations and tastes. Charles ponders and agrees. "Our music's fairly abstract, but... I hate to say we gotta lotta hooks, but we gotta lotta hooks. There's nothin' worse than bland bands." He sighs. "We're not the greatest band in the world. There's gotta be some old band from the '60s who are that."

The man who tells the Dutch press he is the Pixies contemplates his rock 'n' roll good fortune. "This is the only band I've ever been in. It was like let's drop out this semester and do this band thing that everybody's talked about so much. We've just got to keep it going now, for our retirement 'n' all! Yeah, it would be nice to have a good healthy back catalogue that would make us a couple bucks a week!"

This is a merry jest, of course. The Pixies are almost certainly about to become very successful indeed. They have been helped in this quest by being on a major in the US and a top indie band on 4AD in Europe.

Being on 4AD, they've also got good artwork for an American band. "Yeah," grins Charles dangerously. "I wouldn't normally agree with that from an English person, but I know what you mean."

"I wouldn't want to be one of those bands on WEA," he muses on, pronouncing WEA "Weeah", trivia fans, "Cos Weeah doesn't do anything for them over here. I like what those Manchester bands do, those Factory and Mute bands, just more freedom... Also the 4AD association's helped us in France, where it's hard for a band to make it unless they're like really lame. It's like, 'oh 4AD, we've heard of the 4AD'. I'm not trying to knock the French, but..."

"On the one hand they have the tackiest shit over there for entertainment. The music, it's unreal, horrible schmaltzy tack but... Damn good f—in' coffee, man, nice architecture, know



Joey and Kim: very merry melodies

what I mean? Yellow headlights, that's the French!"

Charles' obsession with the French is something to do with having spent much of his life in Boston. "They do like all those loser bands from Boston," he roars. "I saw *The Real Kids from Boston* in '78! Jerry Lewis, all those. There's a whole slew of Boston bands and you could buy all their records on French Fan Club import."

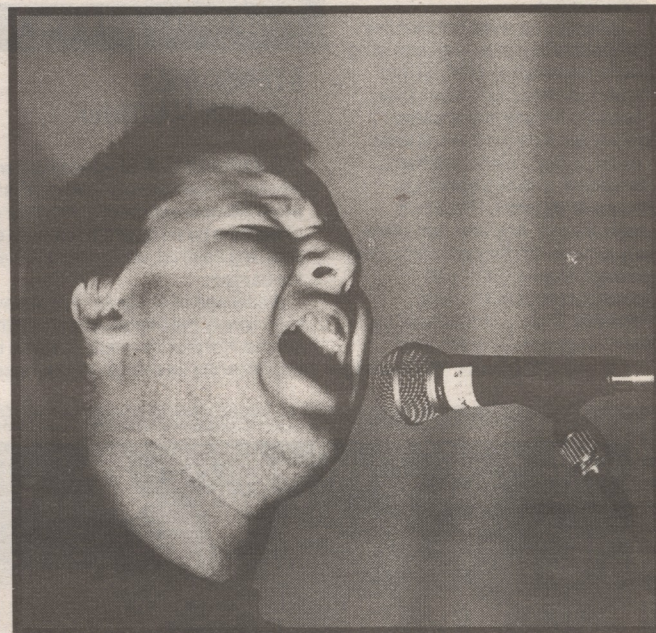
Time for a little drink. We meet Charles' mum in the dressing room. "I'm really happy for Charles," she announces. "You know, maybe he could have got a more normal job, but he's doing fine with this and that's good."

In the corner of the room is a piano. Kim and Joey have found it. They duet horribly on several songs, the melodies of which escape me. Kim is joined by a Pale Saint on 'Blue Moon' and they're quite good. Kevin Cummins' rendition of 'The Coronation Street Theme' causes several people to leave but Kim forges on regardless through blue notes and red wine. "You gotta put ice in it!" she insists to the horror of the many wine buffs present.

Finally a coach comes to take everyone away. The Geordie driver tells us, "I've been stopped by the German police for nothing and I've been stopped by the American police for nothing." Somehow we get home without attracting the attention of the Dutch police and retire, minds buzzing with loud psychotic pop riffs, critiques of the French, and great piano ditties.

Oh yes, and the Pixies are diamond-studded mahogany rock leopards guarding the blood-sweating doors of popular music.

David Quantick



Fat Francis



Wave on



"I am The Pixies!"