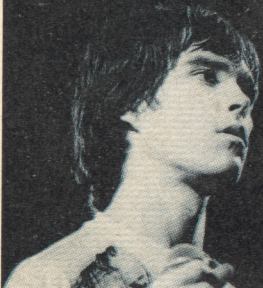
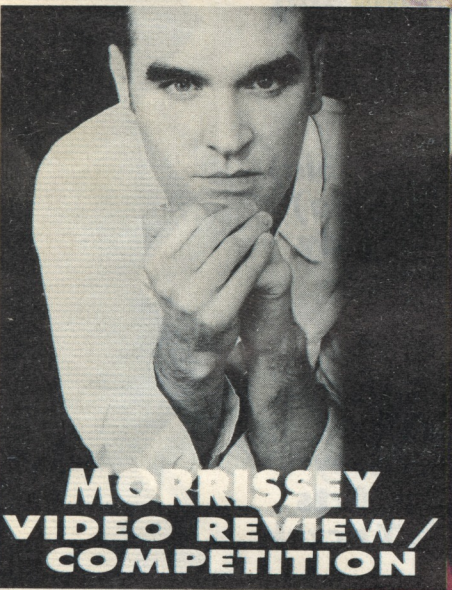


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LIVE ★ THE ROLLING STONES ★ JAMES ★ TEENAGE FAN CLUB ★ THE MOTHERS

1 PIXIE
+
1 MUSE
+

A PERFECT DISASTER=

THE BREEDERS

THE DARLING BUDS
BIG COUNTRY
THE CHIMES
MANTRONIX
KD LANG
THIN WHITE ROPE
THE FRONT

ISSN 0025-9012



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THE BREEDERS

LET IT BREED

PART PIXIE, PART MUSES, PART (EX) PERFECT DISASTER, THE BREEDERS ARE AN INDIE SUPERGROUP WITH AN EYE FOR THE SMUT. TED MICO SUNS HIMSELF IN LA AND TALKS TO KIM, TANYA AND JO ABOUT THE WICKED IMPULSES BEHIND THEIR DEBUT LP, 'POD'. PICS: KEVIN WESTENBERG

AS I RETURN TO THE SWIMMING POOL, Josephine Wiggs looks up, smiles and casually announces: "While you were upstairs Tanya and I were saying that we should take all our clothes off and be sitting here completely naked when you got back".

At this point, I realise things are getting a little out of hand. My first page of questions concerning ethereal beauty being clothed by reserve gets metaphorically blown out of the water. Minutes later, a small gust of wind blows the rest of my questions into the very real and very wet swimming pool.

For the purposes of asking any questions at all, it's decided we'll all keep our clothes on. Kim changes into her swimsuit, fetches another glass of bourbon, while I search for my long-lost composure. It's another sunny day in LA — Mexicans are cleaning out jacuzzis, film stars are suing studios, Josephine is visiting Disneyland, The Pixies and Throwing Muses are recording their albums, the rest of the city's population is either chasing after Madonna tickets or shooting one another with machine guns and I'm melting while trying to interview The Breeders.

THE hispanic pool attendant is awaiting instructions, so I introduce him to the band. Throwing Muses' Tanya Donnelly, former Perfect Disaster bass player Josephine Wiggs and Kim Deal from The Pixies are The Breeders. I tell him they're an Electronic with a short-circuit, a sort of independent supergroup, a Traveling Wilburys for the cultural margins. He nods sagely, then resumes his hunt for plankton.

Kim laughs at my suggestion. Kim laughs a whole lot, but the curiosity value of this agitated amalgam has prompted its own muted hysteria.

"In the States, there's not a lot interest in us," Kim replies. "The Pixies aren't that big over here. The Throwing Muses aren't even as popular as we are and Perfect Disaster are virtually unknown. So, it's not like Yes or ELP or Asia, that group that picked their name because it was big and it was early in the alphabet."

As for her own band's name, Kim claims the phrase The Breeders was inspired by a derogatory term used by homosexuals to describe heterosexuals.

"It's like, 'Yeuch, they're breeders!', like a ripe, stinky thing," she says. "That was what it was meant to be. It could also be men's attitude toward women and women about themselves."

TANYA and Kim originally met because The Pixies and Throwing Muses were labelmates at 4AD. But it wasn't until two years ago, when the pair got hideously drunk together in a Boston disco, that they vowed to create the ultimate disco album.

"It's sounds ridiculous, but it's true," Tanya claims.

"We had time off and we were in Boston and Tanya would come over to my house and we'd play," Kim explains. "We just decided we wanted to make something good."

"Kim is very good at making things happen and the conception of this project began over two years ago," Tanya continues.

"Nice choice of word, conception," Jo points out. "It's The Breeders' theme."

The Pixie and the Muse went through countless line-ups and several aborted attempts to find time to record before Kim finally summoned Jo, who she'd met back in 1988 when Perfect Disaster supported The Pixies for their two London shows.

"I was really impressed by the band and thought it was exactly what live music needs," Jo says. "It takes an awful lot to impress me, I'm so... tired. Then, last year, I was staying with a friend in Frankfurt and The Pixies were playing a sold-out gig. I went along when they were soundchecking and hoped they'd remember me so I could get in to see the concert. Charles kindly put me on the guest list."

"Afterwards in the bar, who should I meet but Kimberly and we spent the rest of the evening together getting drunk. It was actually quite dangerous because the club was next to a railway line and she had this plan that we ought to sit on the edge of the platform, swing our legs over the side and wait for the train to go past. After an hour, I managed to persuade her this wasn't a fine idea."

It's a well known fact that Kim has no thought police, the tiny people inside your head who tell you not to do stupid things because you'll die.

"I think you're right," Kim admits. "If I thought there was enough room, I'd do it. Ooh, ooh," she gushes, remembering some nugget of vital interest. "In Boston this Christmas, there were two guys on top of this building and one of the guys was really drunk and one was straight and the really drunk one tried to jump from one building to another. He missed. He died. It was just on a fling. Isn't that just dumb? 'Wow here I go. Oh no, what a bummer, I misjudged!' I'd only do that if I thought I could reach the other side."

"Kim having no voices telling her what can't be done can come in handy," Tanya says. "This record would

never have been made if those thought police did speak."

Jo's eventful first night with Kim continued when the Perfect Disaster bassist asked the Pixie how she was

"That whole band thing of four people against the world is an ethos you can operate under for the first six months, but then it's stupid. It's just so difficult for one band to fulfil all the creative aspirations of all the individuals of that band" — Jo

getting back to the hotel that night.

"Well, I'm going with you silly," Kim announced. "You guys are giving me a lift."

"I explained that we weren't," says Jo, "largely because I didn't have a car, so I offered to share a taxi with her. I asked her the name of the hotel, she fumbled around in her bag and couldn't find the piece of paper it had been written on. Then, she realised she'd given it away to someone in the bar. She dived back into this crowded bar and amazingly came back half an hour later with all these tiny bits of paper. The address had been completely shredded. We stuck it back together and managed to get her back."

"That was the last I heard of her until two months later, when she asked me to join The Breeders. Then we had thousands of phone calls to organise it all and it wasn't until Kim was actually in my house this January that I believed it was really going to happen. It's just such a difficult thing to achieve."

Was it a conscious decision to have an all-girl band, Kim?

"I thought it would be neat," she explains. "Just like The





gles, or The Bangles From Hell. I work with three guys and I always thought it was neat that the Muses had three and I just wanted to see what it was like.

Women don't really have to do that perfume and image thing anymore," Kim adds. "It's okay to have a man or play the bass, but it's still uncool to be able to play the drums or lead guitar, because they're still considered the important instruments."

The sort of attitude that says, 'Oh she's blonde so she can't play', I can sort of write off," Tanya says. "But what I don't stand is the look of glazed amazement on people's faces when they see I really can play."

IS January, the three women teamed up with hometown Kentucky drummer Shannon Doughton (Brit) and travelled to Edinburgh to record the album, "Pod". It took just 21 days to rehearse and record 14 tracks, a feat unheard of in these days of World Party or R.E.M. For Fears album schedules.

The band attracted their fair share of attention from the normally reserved Scottish capital. The first night they went to the local pub there were three or four people in what Tanya describes as "someone's tiny living room". On the second night, the place was packed with 75 men, most offering to buy drinks.

"When we ordered pints of lager, or committed the ultimate sexual sin by ordering Guinness, they cooled off," Jo explains. At the end of their first week, the studio roof caved in, soaking half the equipment and ruining a new carpet. The following evening, their hillbilly drummer Brit, who'd never been out of Kentucky before, found the Edinburgh nightlife all too dazzling and spent his first big night out dancing with "some really hot babe" who turned out to be the local transvestite.

He's now delivering pizza for Dominos back in Kentucky. Despite these incidents and the limited hours available, Tanya believes that once they got to Edinburgh, time stood still.

"It seemed to go on forever," she says, "probably because we bonded."

You bonded?

Jo: "There was an awful lot of bonding going on."

Tanya: "It was like a big pajama party - Jo even bought Kim a pair and we mixed the record in our pajamas."

Kim: "It was like summer camp, or rather winter camp in Edinburgh. Well, to be honest, it was like winter camp for a collection of losers, cos we all felt like we were all these losers, so it was just weird."

ACCORDING to The New York Times, in the course of a lifetime the average American will spend seven years in the bathroom, five years waiting in line and two years making phone calls to people that aren't home. Spy magazine took out its abacus and calculated that this means that every day, the average American spends two hours 20 minutes in the bathroom, one hour

40 minutes waiting in line and 40 minutes ringing people who aren't home. In order to find the precious time needed to make The Breeders a reality, Kim had to give up queuing and stopped going to the toilet.

The album was recorded at a time when Kristen Hersh was writing songs and The Pixies were taking a well-deserved holiday following the exhaustive world tour. While Kim "put on chore clothes" and froze in Scotland, Charles drove across America in a canary yellow Cadillac, playing the occasional solo gig to pay for furniture for his LA home. The Pixies' drummer was hating his holiday in Jamaica, while guitarist Joey Santiago went to search for his soul in the Grand Canyon ("He said he'd found it, but didn't like it, it chased him, so he ran away").

KIM chose Steve Albini to produce the record, partly

continued overleaf

because she thinks he's a good producer and partly because she only had two phone numbers: Albini, who produced The Pixies' "Surfer Rosa" and Gil Norton, who produced "Doolittle". This limited her options somewhat.

Jo believes Albini was the only man for the job bearing in mind the ridiculously small amount of time they had to play with.

"A lot of the time, the things we played first ended up being the finished item," she says. Although the band seem happy with the production, Albini's one-take policy caused minor ructions with Tanya.

"He wouldn't let us do anything more than twice," she says. "For all the fights we had with him in the studio, for all the times I'd stomp up stairs in my pajamas screaming that I couldn't live with such-and-such a guitar part, the next morning I realised he was usually right."

It seems strange that a man who has never exactly come out of his way to shirk off the misogynist label attached to him after the Rapeman fiasco, should want to work with three women in pajamas.

"Definitely," Tanya says, "but, in some ways, he's the least misogynist man I know. I never felt uncomfortable working with him. That was a major fear of mine when we first walked into the studio. The first thing he said to me was, 'I don't like vocals'. What a ridiculous thing to say!"

"Apparently," Jo adds, "when Kim rung him up before the album and told him we were going to do a Beatles' song, he said, 'Oh, "Happiness Is A Warm Cock"'. She leaked and rung me and said, 'I'm not quite sure how well you're going to get on. . . .'"

"He actually said, 'Happiness Is A Warm Cum'," Kim corrects. "I was worried, but mainly because no matter who I picked, I'd worry. When we did 'Surfer Rosa' he never ignored me or was condescending or all the other things he's accused of. If he had been, I wouldn't have kicked him. You do something, he tells you what he thinks, if you don't change anything, he just calls you all kinds of names."

"To a certain extent, it was a conscious decision on Kim's part to choose Albini because she needed someone to fight with," Jo concludes. "The thing that really impressed me was the upfront and straightforward way which everything was dealt with. I put it down to them being Americans. You just have the antrum and five minutes later, it's gone. It was astonishing to see people expressing their anger like Kim does and I started doing it myself."

It was drummer Brit who experienced first hand Jo's newfound freedom of expression. Kim describes how he was riding in a cab, out of his head, begging Kim to hit him.

"He kept saying, 'Kim, Kim punch me, punch me'. I wouldn't do it. Then, all of sudden, Josephine did. She took an almighty swing at him. I've never been that close to someone being punched and it was like this dull thud. I was amazed she did it. So was Brit, but he enjoyed it." I ask why the album's called "Pod". Tanya believes the word was chosen because it sounded good. Joe claims the word "fits in with the name of the band - fertility and all that", while Kim has a completely different story to tell. "It could be, 'What are you up to partner?' Steve Albini said the slang for 'What you up to partner?' in Montana is 'What you up to pod'. He thinks that's where comes from, but it's not. It's supposed to be kinda like a uterus."

Glad I asked.

THE mere idea of The Breeders has lead to speculation that there's something inherently wrong with the trio's position in their original bands, a theory compounded by the sudden departure of Josephine Viggs from Perfect Disaster. After all, Kim has written and sung songs like "Gigantic" and "Silver" for The Pixies before now, why form a new band? Both Kim and Tanya are quick to snuff out the rumours, stating that they're still very much committed to their respective bands.

"There were no songs I wrote that I definitely didn't want done by The Pixies," Kim explains, "but I think that Charles is the lead singer for The Pixies and he writes the songs and that's good, that's as it should be."

"The Muses have open marriage," says Tanya. "It's an understanding. As long as The Breeders didn't infringe on Muse-time, which they didn't, no one seemed to mind."

The experience of working outside the well-defined lines of their normal groups does seem to have had a liberating effect on the three women. Especially Jo, who evidently felt so liberated, she up and left Perfect Disaster.

"Because it was so new and exciting and I got to feel nervous for the first time," says Tanya, "there were times when it reminded me of when the Muses first started and kinda liked that, but the Muses are my primary band at the moment. Even if Kim left The Pixies, I'd want to do both. I won't let The Breeders happen without me either."

"I was kinda nervous," Kim confides, although it's difficult to envisage Kim being nervous about any situation short of an full-scale nuclear assault. "With this," she says, "it was a worry if I'd called the right people or chosen the right songs or the right lines. With the Pixies, it's like, 'What time to I have to be there?' If you're singing the songs then you really have to decide if you like those songs. If you're playing the bass, you can just get into the chord changes. I still like doing both."

"I think it's good if people can do both things," Jo adds. "That whole band thing of four people against the world is an ethos you can operate under for the first six months, but then it's just stupid. It's just so difficult for one band to fulfil all the creative aspirations of all the

individuals of that band."

Besides, Tanya offers, "it's enough for me to know that I can do something else. That's what The Breeders did for me. I realised that I didn't have eight legs, I have two."

What did Charles think of the album?

"He liked 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun' and one other," Kim replies. "David liked a few of them and I don't think that Joey has even heard it. Most people seem to be pretty positive about it."

TODAY'S trio are, in fact, the second incarnation of The Breeders. The Breeders (Mark I) was formed by Kim and her sister Kelly in Ohio over five years ago. The band scaled up the local rock circuit, finally reaching the dizzying heights of a support slot with Steppenwolf (or what was left of Steppenwolf). Then Kim borrowed her sister's bass, travelled to Boston, answered Black Francis' Musician's Wanted ad and joined The Pixies. Kim and Kelly are identical twins, a fact laden with such global significance, I feel it must be told.

"When I first heard that, I thought, 'My God, there's another one like that in the world!'" Jo gasps.

Until their last years at highschool, Kelly and Kim were so alike, not even their parents could tell them apart. One would always have to have their nails painted.

The sisters used to sit in each other's classes, take each other's exams, swap instruments in their band and no one would be any the wiser.

"She used to steal my boyfriends as well," Kim exclaims.

What's your sister like now?

"She's a lush, basically."

Good to hear there's no sibling animosity. Kim's favourite word is luscious. One syllable is all the sisters share in common nowadays, but there is still the playful idea that when Kim gets bored during the next marathon Pixies tour, her sister could deputise and no one would know. Come to think of it, how do I know I'm talking to the real Kim at the moment?

"Oh come on, you know me. Well, maybe you don't. It's kinda wierd, isn't it? I mean, I know I'm me, but I'm also a bit of her, sort of."

"Do you think my legs are tanning?" she asks, changing the subject. They're toasting nicely.

ALTHOUGH "Pod" contains obvious baggage from the threesome's other groups, the Pixies/Muses/Disaster influences are surprisingly thin on the ground. The album embraces a whole gamut of eclectic jetsam, from the psychedelic rapture of Shocking Blue to the heavily punctuated rhythms of Television circa "Adventure", with a light sprinkling of mutant Shangri Las. Even though songs like "Metal Man" or "Opened" sound like unfinished first drafts, songs like "Iris" are wonderfully jagged enough to flabber anyone's ghost.

THE album's most striking feature remains the lyrics. Kim may sing the songs with her usual smiling party-girl nursery rhyme, but the words themselves move from the surreal to the downright sordid, with themes ranging from *menage a trois*, to abortion, to child molestation, bad sex and bad TV. It's like seeing the sweet little girl from "Poltergeist" with her fresh smelling skin, her apple-pie cheeks and her untangled hair. As she smiles, blood dribbles from the sides of her mouth.

"It's just narrations," says Tanya. "Kim just tells stories. It's like bringing all that stuff to the coffee table."

"I lent a male friend of mine the tape and he said he found the experience of listening to the album intimidating," says Jo. "With most people, you get stories about what happened to them on Tuesday, or their broken love affair, but Kim's songs are actually little stories. They maybe from personal experience, but they're distanced. She has such a good narrator's voice. I can imagine turning on the radio and hearing her read stories."

I ask Kim to tell me the story behind her stories and she obliges, eventually. One song, "Opened", was based on their drummer's recurring dream of flying with his cousin.

"I'm not sure how much of this you can print," Kim says, "but he's this 19-year-old teenager who picks his nose and burps and stuff like that. Anyway, he was telling me this dream and using words like boobies and titties and using the same language that old men do in porno films. I thought it was so weird. The song is his dream, verbatim."

MOST of the songs are so fantastic, they could only be based in real life. Nobody's imagination can compete with the bizarre realities of the everyday.

Even the seemingly innocent songs, like "Glorious" seem to have a perverted streak running through them.

"Well, 'Glorious' is about a person who's now grown up, but still has memories of living with their Aunt. But their Aunt would take them upstairs to this bedroom. . . . It's the vaguest of memories, but they know it was kinda naughty, but they liked it anyway. It's kind of, child molestation is A-okay with me! No, it's not like that at all!"

Tanya says that "Iris" relates to a weird night Kim experienced some time ago. Kim, however, seems reluctant to embroider the tale any further. Eventually, she says, "It's kinda like a vegetable." When this explanation is met by blank incomprehension, she adds, "It's like a pea pod flowering, and then getting ripe and stinky. I don't actually associate women with fish, but I just found out that surrealists always used to, so it all comes together. I don't know why fish, except for the obvious, smelly reason."

What about the tale of "Doe"?

"Doe" is about a lithium overdose, sort of," Kim hesitates, then stares at her toenails. They're painted



coral. She's definitely Kim. "Oh, I don't know whether to tell you, so many secrets," she says coyly.

I tell her she could always paraphrase and say, "A friend of mine told me. . . ."

"Okay, a friend told me about another friend who was on thorazine for a while. Thorazine is supposed to be a wacky drug to take, but not one you'd choose to abuse because of the mental disturbances it can give you. It's about this couple who are schizophrenics who're taking their medication and who sneak out of their parents' houses to go out for the night. It's a pretty average story, but instead of nice cozy highschool kids, they're both on medication and flipping out and going to burn the entire town down. But, they don't really know they're doing anything wrong. They just say, 'Doe', like Bambi."

"What does thorazine do to you? I do not know, I really don't. It's like living in a space movie and you only remember about two things out of the week, but those things you never forget and then these seemingly small events start to become huge because they account for so much. . . ."

Despite the fact Kim rightly compares listening to all Beatles' songs to listening to commercial jingles, "Happiness Is A Warm Gun" (or "Cum") was suggested to her by 4AD supremo Ivo and she discovered that she actually liked the song, hence its inclusion on the album.

"Hellbound" is about an abortion that lives and contains the immortal line: "It lives despite the knives internal", which is still the line that causes Kim the most acute embarrassment.

"The great thing about Kim is that even though she was embarrassed about it - and she was ridiculed by us about it - she still didn't change it," says Jo. "When Kim actually got round to singing it for the record, she backed away from the microphone and mumbled it a little so people couldn't work out what it was."

"I couldn't think of another line that scanned," Kim explains. "Why abortion? It's kinda like a heavy metal hymnal, 'We're all hellbound'. The song's basically about making a mess. I just had abortion on my mind, not for any particular reason."

AT the polar extreme of "Hellbound" is "Fortunately Gone", a honey-suckled Sixties harmony which was originally demoted by Kim and her sister years ago. It describes a girl who dies, goes to heaven and becomes an angel and watches over the guy below because she loves him so very, very much.

"I just wanted to sing it so it sounded sickeningly sweet," Kim explains. "It didn't really come out as sickening as I've sung it, but that was probably Albini. It's about a love that's so desperate that she can't even leave him alone when she's dead. Me, I'm with the angels because I know no boundaries, but I know when to quit."

"Oh" is perhaps the only song which vaguely borders on the sentimental. It used to be called "The Insect Song" and examines the subject of bugs being squashed from the insects' point of view. The Entomologist Digest has already described the song as "astute and penetrating".

"It's like 'Go, insects of the world, go'," Kim says. "If you get stepped on, you bust and glow, not just live a

good life. I hope no one steps on me."

According to Jo, "Only in 3s" goes back to the sexual theme of the album. "It's about threesomes," she says, "Or perhaps a threesome in particular."

"They're not ALL about sex," Kim counters. "Not frivolously about sex anyway. Let me see, The Beatles one may not be about sex. We don't know for sure, anyway. 'Hellbound' is not about sex, but the result of sex. 'Fortunately Gone' is definitely not only about sex. 'Opened' is sort of soft porn, 'Only in 3s' is. . . well, like Jo says, a *menage a trois*. I must have seen movies and heard people talking about *menage a trois* a lot over a period of a few weeks and just thought, 'What is this?' I don't think there's a lot of it going around, I think there's a lot of hoping."

Kim reels off most of the rest of the album's titles and becomes increasingly distressed, until she hits on "Limehouse".

"Limehouse" is NOT about sex. It's about an opium den instead!" she says, breaking into convulsive laughter. "It's about Sherlock Holmes. He had a problem with opium. It's about being in the warm dark place with pillows, daydreaming 24 hours a day. It sounds great for three days, doesn't it?"

Kim communes with the sunshine for a while before finally reaching a momentous conclusion.

"Jeez, most of the songs are so dirty," Kim says. She's right in that they're not the average Mills & Boon idyllic romance, where boy meets girl, they court, they embrace, her alabaster breasts heave, a bead of sweat trickles down his back and. . . . The chapter ends and the next chapter describes the glowing morning sun. Most of "Pod" occurs in the three dots during the night, where the vulgar becomes the matter-of-fact, where the manic becomes the mundane and where the sheets need laundering.

Suddenly, Tanya spots a wasp hovering near her. She has a minor epileptic fit, until assured the wasp is well across the Mexican border.

"It's only a wasp," says Jo. "It's nature."

"Nature's fine as long as it doesn't touch me!" Tanya replies.

ALL three girls seem determined to keep The Breeders alive, despite overloaded work schedules. The band were going to make a surprise appearance at Glastonbury next month, but plans fell through because the Muses will still be recording in LA. Meanwhile, Jo's next concept might be called The Naked Bosom, based on a chapter from "Mr Polumbo", although Tanya thinks the name ought to be more graphic, like The Bare Tit. A fourth Pixies album is due out in late July, followed by another world tour, which means the earliest time The Breeders might assemble for another album would be at the beginning of 1991. Amid this haze of uncertainty, one thing's for sure: it'll be worth waiting for.

Nineteen-ninety will be the year when The Pixies surpass all expectations, but The Breeders have proved they too can create a stained and intriguing skin for fantasy. The sun falls and we depart by degrees, with clothes still on.

Bring on the three dots.