

THE BREEDERS

"BLOODY MARY?" ASKS KELLEY.

Thank you.

"Do you have a straw?" asks Tanya.

Kelley hails the waitress in the New York restaurant we're drinking in. The waitress ignores us for several minutes, finally realises we're not going to go away, and comes over. Without straws.

"What are you looking at?" Josephine asks me.

A fly or something in my drink. Is it an olive? It seems to be moving. Laughter. Someone lights a cigarette. I start spooning the vodka off the top of my drink with a tea-spoon.

"You're not going to start choking again, are you?" asks Tanya.

THE Breeders – Kim Deal, Tanya Donnelly, Josephine Wiggs, Brit and Kim's twin sister, Kelley – are back. One Pixie, one ex-Throwing Muse, one ex-Perfect Disaster, one Slint and one computer programmer. Not so much a supergroup as a super group.

There are three main differences between the band who released "Pod" in 1990, and this latest incarnation. One: Kelley has been added to the line-up, so The Breeders are currently blessed with three female lead guitarists/singers. Two: Brit, for reasons best known to himself, is now calling himself Mike Hunt. (Incidentally, check out his band's 1990 release, the awesome "Spiderland". You won't regret it.) Three: their sound is far lushier than before.

Next?



LAST summer, The Breeders came together in Kim Deal's hometown of Dayton, Ohio, to rehearse a handful of her songs and one cover version. Between watching old episodes of "Star Trek" and "The Avengers", that is. The rehearsals went so well, they figured they may as well record them. At the time of this interview, they've been booked into a New York studio for a couple of weeks.

Today is their last day, and they're out celebrating. Well, Tanya, Kelley, Brit and Jo are. Kim's in the studio, putting the final touches to the vocal on their version of The Who's "So Sad About Us". We don't let the thought of her working her ass off deter us from running up a bar bill of close to \$250. We have a job to do, us.

Whose idea was it to reform The Breeders? I thought you were meant to be a one-off.

"It wasn't really a decision. I just woke up one morning and I was in Dayton," laughs Tanya.

"And it's been a long time, too," adds Brit. "I can't imagine two months compared to 20 days. It blows my mind. The last time we were together it was two months – not that it was hard or anything."

Did you seclude yourselves? Did you hire a villa in the middle of nowhere and hang out with each other exclusively?

"We did for 'Pod', but for this one, no," replies Tanya. "We're in New York!"

"The first one was like a Godsend of things falling..." Brit begins, before being interrupted by a stifled explosion to his left. I'm choking on my Bloody Mary.

The assembled company collapse in hysterics.

THIS may be the first time Kelley has played on a Breeders record, but she helped form the group in Ohio with her sister when she was about 16. They were together for a while, playing local bars and clubs, even getting to support Steppenwolf. Then Kim borrowed Kelley's bass, travelled down to Boston, answered a Musician's Wanted ad from Black Francis and the world hasn't been the same since.

"The original Breeders did a lot of covers," Kelley tells me. "In the Seventies, we did disco songs like 'Car Wash' and 'Disco Inferno' with the hand movements and everything. Then there was the one about 'Boogie woogie oogie-ing' or something. After travelling very slowly through the heavy drug scene, we graduated on to Delaney & Bonnie covers."

Kelley and Kim, as has already been noted, are identical twins. This sure don't make the journalist's life any easier. The first time I encounter them together – at photographer Michael Lavine's Bowery studio – I only just manage to tell them apart. And that's only because I'd bumped into Kelley the night before. Or was it Kim? Whatever. Kim looks slightly more worldly, but that's it.

Breeders Mark II occurred after Tanya and Kim got hideously drunk together in a Boston disco a few years back, and vowed to create the "ultimate disco album" together. Jo joined them shortly after, and then left her group, the Brighton-based Perfect Disaster.

What they eventually came up with was "Pod", a marvellously fresh album that took 21 days to both rehearse and record. Its spontaneity shone through gloriously, often sounding like a fun, less po-faced Pixies. It was also Kurt Cobain's favourite record of the past two years. In fact, the only reason The Breeders aren't supporting Nirvana on their forthcoming tour of the States is because Kim's Pixies commitments (supporting U2) won't permit it.

When the Maker last interviewed them in May, 1990, Tanya claimed that for both her and Kim, the Muses and Pixies would remain their main bands. This still holds true, except for Tanya – her main group is no longer Throwing Muses, but a new project, Belly. Anyway.

The burning question on everybody's lips has to be, why wasn't Kelley in The Breeders last time?

"Because I didn't decide to take time off work."

So why are you in them now?

"Because I did decide to take time off work."

The waitress comes round.

"Are you lot getting another Corona and Bloody Mary?" I ask. "I think I'll have one as well."

THE sound of the new Breeders EP is closer to last year's opulent This Mortal Coil album than the sparser, Steve Albini-produced, "Pod". The underlying menace of the four songs on "Safari" – "Do You Love Me Now?", the scariest "Don't Call Home", "Safari" and "So Sad" – are tempered by a softer treatment.

Kim Deal's original production had the songs full, challenging. Mark Fregard's remixing turned down the bass and brought out the harmonies. And whereas "Pod" was supposed to be about sex, the new single is far, far sadder.

Except for "Safari", that is. That, as Tanya informs me, "is mean and has a sexual element".

What's the sexual element comprise of?

"It's about coming," Kelley replies, robustly sipping her vodka.

Another drink arrives.

Why did you cover "So Sad About Us"?

"It's like the ultimate sad Sixties song," says Kim, who's magically materialised. "It sounded good, and it's kind of our theme song. Roger Daltrey does some great vocal overdubs on the original and we love vocal overdubs. The lyrics are, like, the understatement of the year: 'So sad about us, so sad about us'."

She breaks into an impromptu version with her sister.

"Do You Love Me Now?" is the meanest, because it's like a sound gone wild," Kim explains. "The video should be you," she says, pointing to her twin, "following someone like Jon Bon Jovi around the streets of New York, someone you've never had an affair with. And 'Don't Call Home' is sad because it's about not being allowed to call home."

Tanya interrupts her.

"It's about being dis..."

Disinherited? Disembowelled? Dissed?

"Disowned."

Kim disappears again. Presumably to add a few more overdubs.

"**WHAT** was the question again?" asks Kelley. "Something about seclusion?"

That's right. We're travelling through time, readers. Alcohol does that to you sometimes.

"No, we're in New York. New York City – the big city of dreams," Tanya says. "Brit's been really busy, he's so popular. We were in the Max Fish, and when Brit came in about 60 people said hello to him. He's been out every night since we've been here. A friend of mine called our hotel the other day, and the guy at the desk goes, 'We don't have her listed here', and then goes, 'Wait. Is she staying with Brit?'"

"Speaking of New York, I can give you a good report on the state of New York as a regular visitor," Brit tells us. "There is human shit on the sidewalks, there are the filthiest commerce people you've ever seen, there's garbage everywhere and it's really hard to find a job here. But the city overall is the same in its energies. It's always the same, it's wonderful."

"People say that New York has really been going downhill over the past two years," Tanya says.

"Yeah," agrees Brit. "There are two really good indicators of that I heard recently. One is a person getting run over 28 times on the highway before someone stopped."

"Then, 100 to 150 yards off the highway, there was some piece of shit, man, raping a three-year-old girl, when there was a total bumper-to-bumper traffic jam right next to them. All these people were rubbernecking this guy doing this to this girl and nobody did anything until finally this tow-truck driver jumped out, chased the guy and caught him."

"Then all the people in the neighbourhood started trying to kill him," he continues. "So this tow-truck driver had to fight all these people off, while trying to hold him down until the cops arrived."

"Copters patrol Brooklyn every night," he says. "And the horror stories flow like water from the spring – everybody's got one."

Brit disappears, back to the studio.

"Bye. Make a good record!"

SOMEHOW or other, talk turns to losing one's virginity.

"We had this whole conversation," Tanya says. "It's not a matter of breaking any part of the skin or the blockage. When you make love to somebody," she continues, her voice dropping very low, "you lose your virginity, whatever that means. It's not just penetration."

"What?" asks Kelley, returning to the table with another arm-load of drinks. "What's that you say?" We tell her.

"What's non-penetrative sex mean?"

Tanya explains.

"Are you serious?" she asks amazed. "Then it's not sex then, is it?"

"You can make love to someone without having them inside you," argues Tanya.

"But that's the whole point!" argues Kelley.

"You can't consider lesbians to be virgins," counters Tanya. "Because they have sex with each other."

"I think they are," disagrees Kelley. "If you f*** someone, you f*** someone."

"That's terrible!" Josephine says, aghast.

"I consider losing your virginity to be the first time you get into a bed or the back seat of a car, or a bench, or the park, or the bathroom sink – you know what I'm saying," Tanya pleads. "There are so many levels to sex, penetration is just a formality – and I would like to stress that I have been penetrated, but that's not why I'm sticking up for it."

"It's this hang-up that sex is for having children," Josephine argues.

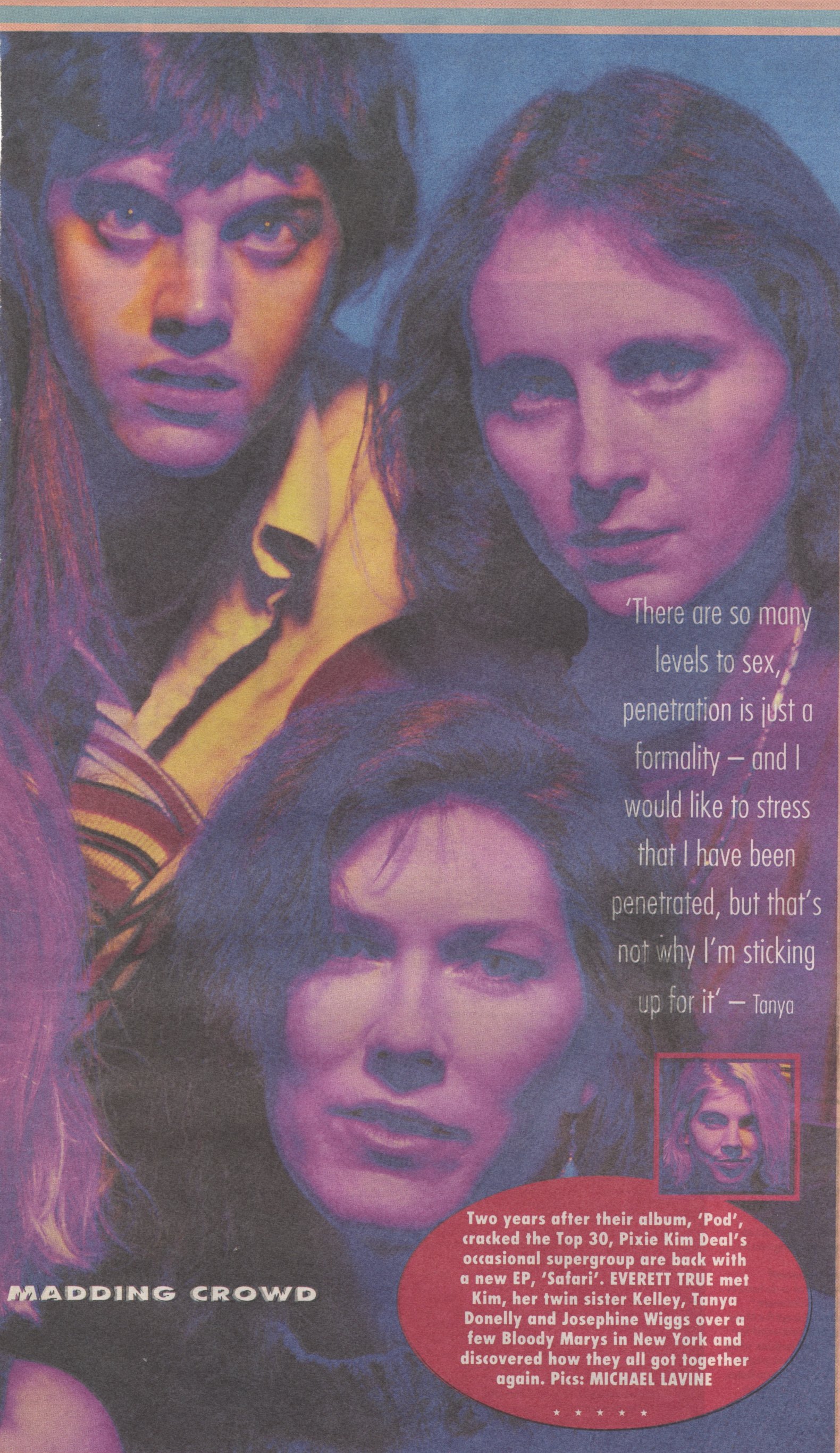
"The sexual act is all in the subconscious."

"I've been penetrated!" Kelley suddenly announces, to much merriment from an increasingly tipsy table. The next comment (from me) is unprintable.

"This is very interesting, because there was this huge scandal going on



SAFARI FROM THE



'There are so many levels to sex, penetration is just a formality — and I would like to stress that I have been penetrated, but that's not why I'm sticking up for it' — Tanya

Two years after their album, 'Pod', cracked the Top 30, Pixie Kim Deal's occasional supergroup are back with a new EP, 'Safari'. EVERETT TRUE met Kim, her twin sister Kelley, Tanya Donnelly and Josephine Wiggs over a few Bloody Marys in New York and discovered how they all got together again. Pics: MICHAEL LAVINE



while we were in Ohio about the 'Dayton Love Doctor', Kelley tells me. "This gynaecologist chose to reorganise the female vagina — as opposed to the male vagina — and you know where our 'button' is? He said it's in the wrong place and it should be closer to the place of penetration, which is true.

"So he just changed them round — he didn't even ask permission. He just rearranged their stuff."

NOW we're talking about Kim beating people up in bar brawls in Dayton. There's no stopping these babes.

"Basically, Kim and Kelley beat these guys at pool and they weren't happy about it at all," relates Tanya. "One of the guys called Kelley a See-You-En-Tuesday and Kim rushed to her defence."

"She said the c-word over and over and over," Kelley continues. "Until the guy pushed her against the pool table and she kicked him. Anyway, we got thrown out. It was hard!"

"It was probably the most exciting day they'd seen since they invented the aeroplane," comments Jo, dryly.

"Exactly!" Kelley exclaims. "And that's why such cool shit comes out of Nebraska because there's nothing else to do."

"We went to the motor speedway in Dayton," Tanya continues. "The track's in the shape of an eight, so the tail eventually runs into the front. It was so cool. They'd skim sideways just to avoid each other. We had rubber in our beer, on our faces, in our hair."

"Everyone was so blasé about it. There were all these kids there," Tanya remembers, "But no one was reacting to it, except me and Kelley. In between races there would be announcements to say who'd won the prize hams that evening, or the use of a 1989 red Chevy."

The guitarist looks suitably impressed.

"A WOMAN just threw up in the sewer without even breaking stride."

That's right. Kim's turned up again. We dismally try to attract the waitress' attention. She's ignoring us — us, the loudest table in the joint. Eventually we succeed, so we order twice as many Bloody Marys as there are people and some demon fave drink of Kim's which involves Bailey's, vodka and God knows what else. Tanya's already thrown up three times in the last 10 days because of it.

Why are your songs so sad? Are you a sad person, Kim?

"'Safari' isn't sad, it's mean about ookie boys."

What are ookie boys? Someone starts tapping the side of a glass and talking about emotionally troubled people targeting Tanya. I don't really know what's going on, to be honest. What's an ookie boy?

"Cry-babies."

Talk drifts away. Let's get back to Kim's sad and mean personality.

"She's either sad or mean. Not 'and', 'or'," Kelley says, cattily.

"She's happy when she's mean."

Tanya ignores her, and brings up the subject of sex again.

"All the songs on 'Pod' were about sex," she concludes.

"THEY WERE NOT!" Kim shouts loudly back at her. "They were sexual, but you can be sexual without talking about sex."

"Which brings us back to the penetrative point!" comments Jo, wryly.

Kelley's got a new angle on the whole argument.

"Maybe orgasms should come into it," she wonders, blurrily.

"In that case, we're all virgins," jokes Kim, to much ribald laughter. Anybody want one more Corona?

"Do You Love Me Now?" is released by 4AD on April 6.