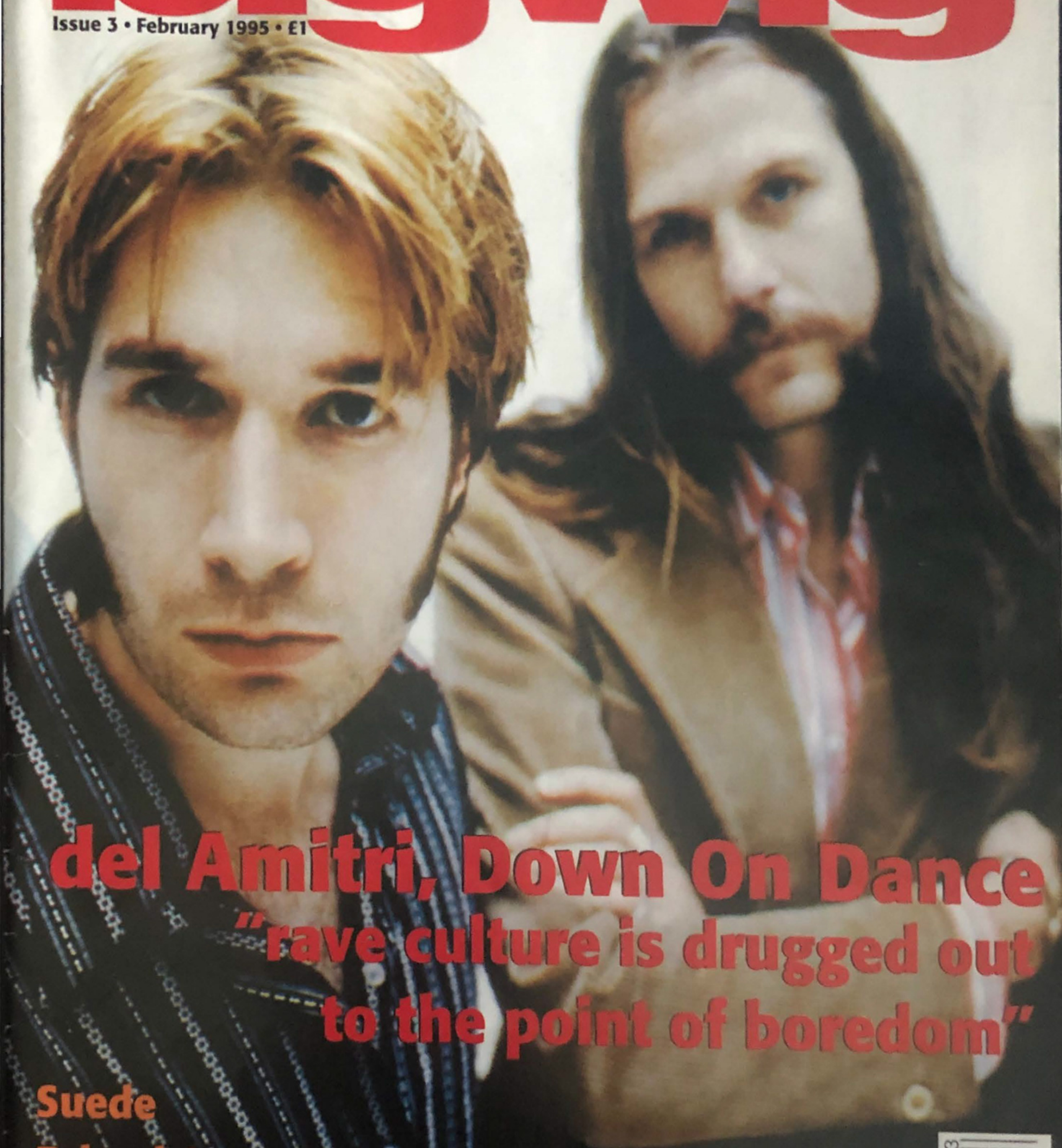


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del Amitri, Down On Dance
"rave culture is drugged out
to the point of boredom"

Suede

Primal Scream

Steven Campbell's Leftism

Simple Minds

Cobalt Jury's Paul bares all



Creeping Bent • Headswim • Carol Laula • James Grant • Ezio • Salad

Interview **In Pursuit** of **Rock**

Enough of this dance, hip hop and throw away pop.

del Amitri are en route to Rock Resurrection.

Ewan McLeod investigates.

I'm sitting here thinking "Same old shit." I mean it's del Amitri, fuckin' cowboy boots and sideburns and some poxy angst-ridden melancholy warbling in an acoustic type fashion about wandering through the dark damp streets of Glasgow.

Just the type of thing that I was right into in my spotty teenage years away back in 1989. Just the type of thing that was del Amitri's debut album *Waking Hours*. Don't get me wrong, I loved that album - still do. It's a classic. It captured something back then, a mood, a feeling buzzed round town from every old man's real ale tavern to the hip live venues where the poets and artists, or students wanting to be poets and artists, hung out. I played that album to death along with Texas' *Southside*, Love & Money's *Dogs in the Traffic*, and the Silencer's *Blues for Buddha*. It did really well outside of Scotland, Europe, America and even England. Sure that impressed me, but "Nothing Ever Happens" and "Kiss This Thing Goodbye" were two very personal songs that had something 'local' that I could relate to. They were Scottish. Despite the fact that the songs were probably never written with that intent or even spoke patriotically the way some other Scots bands did then didn't matter even although that's probably one of the most insulting things you could say about del Amitri. What I'm trying to say is it captured something then, it set a tone for the moment. That's what was going on at the

time and, whilst that album has stood the test of time, we don't need anymore of it. I wish those guys would just let their hair down and rock. Rock without this pretentious patriotic bollocks that always seem to be tagged on to them. Not the same old shit.

Well, how wrong it is to preview an album before you've pressed play on the cassette deck and actually listened to it. The fact is that nine times out of ten, your presumptions are not far wrong but this time this journalist was certainly caught out. Either this was a new rock band which couldn't possibly come from Scotland with a sound like this and had a lead singer that sounded like a slightly pissed off version of Justin Currie, or del Amitri had finally got themselves some attitude.

Even the title, *Twisted*, suggested that things were not quite as they should be on yer average del Amitri record. It teed off the opener nicely 'Food for Songs' is a huge, grotesque track that lulls you into a false sense of security then fucks your ears with a weighty, rolling, thundering drum pattern, harsh, jarring electric guitar and distorted rasping, dare I say almost Bono-esque vocal effects.

There's no letting up as the second track, 'Start With Me' kicks its heels and picks up the pace at an even racier tempo before breaking into the single 'Here And Now' which, although it has all the 'commercially viable' merits of singlehood, is far from being

the strongest track off the album and certainly not an obvious first choice.

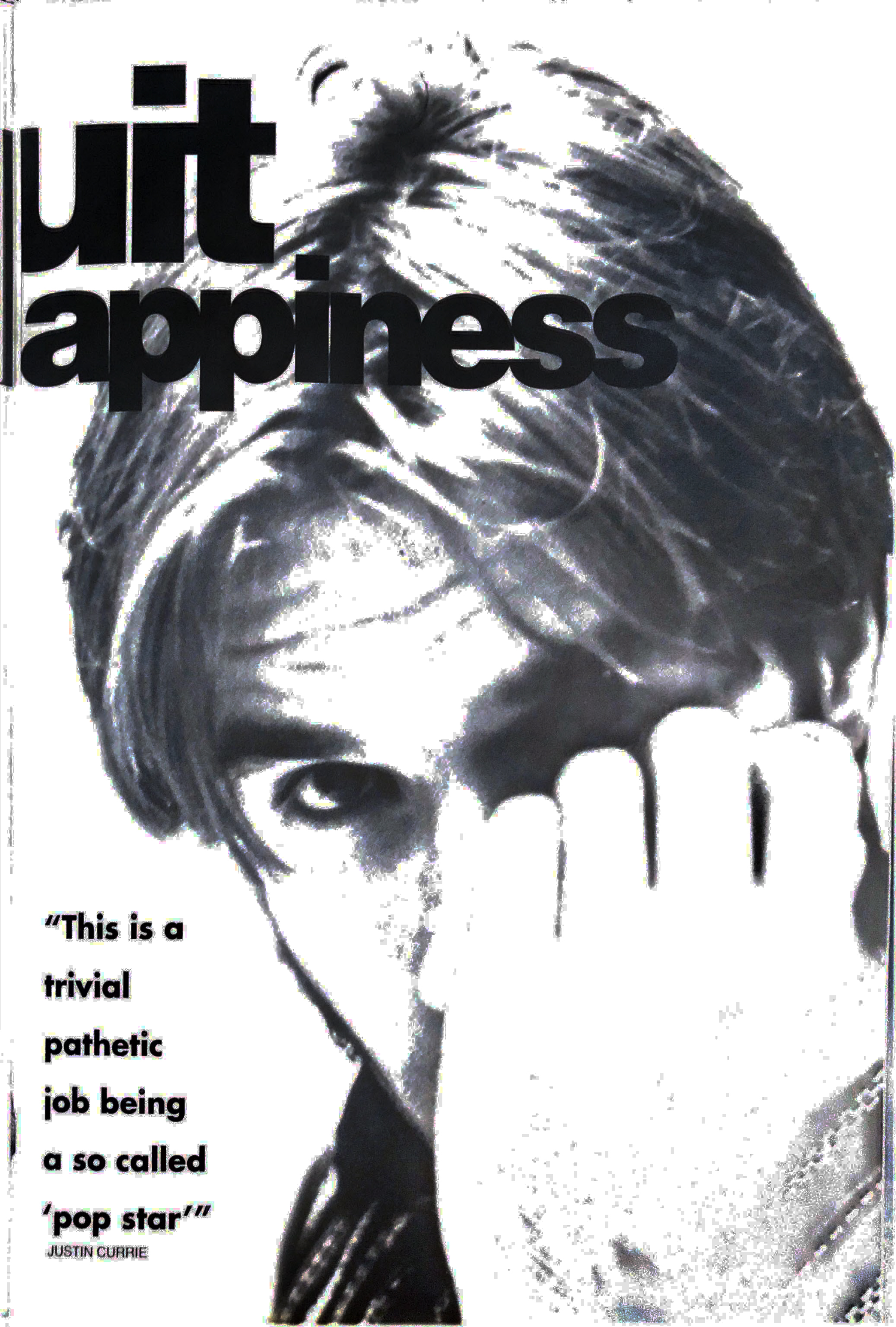
With hindsight I wish I'd asked Justin Currie if they were trying to break people in gently into the concept of del Amitri being around again by giving them something they've already heard and know they like, or wouldn't it have been better to shock people so they could say 'that's not del Amitri' and listen to the first single without the same pre-conceived misconceptions that I had. Perhaps another time, but in the meantime, Justin, what the fuck happened?

"At last we've made a rock record, which is always something we'd set out to do on every record. But in the past things have always been pop-ified by production, which is our fault. This time, though, the finished product sounds almost exactly the same as when we demoed the songs!"

So what's the big difference in making a rock album as opposed to a pop album?

"Well, the main difference is that you've got to be able to play live in the studio, which is something we've never done before. We've always worried terribly about how tight things are, and ended up making quite tight records that sound rather vibrateless. It's really difficult to do thirty takes of something and still know what the fuck you're meant to be doing."

Did your influences change between making your second album, *'Change Everything'* and *'Twisted'*? "How do you mean?" "Well



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JUSTIN CURRIE

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more contemporary or current. "No, not really, I mean I'm just as impressed with the new bands like Oasis and Deus as I am by The Stranglers' records I have, but that's not really affected this album. This album was influenced more by simple day to day things, like there are two driving songs on the album 'cos I've just passed my driving test. What made a bigger difference is that Ian (Harvie, guitar) and I co-wrote a lot of the new stuff because I don't write great pop songs and I was sick of writing quaint folk ditties."

It seems a lot of Scottish bands that made debuts around the same time as you have rested on their laurels, got out of touch with what's going on and made a new record that, as soon as it is released, is out of date.

"Yeah, I think what's worse is that others have tried to adapt to a new style and really missed the place, 'cos they're doing something that isn't them. We don't really worry about being out of date. It's del Amitri - take it or leave it."

Indeed it would appear to be a side of del Amitri that most of us haven't seen but, if the truth be known, Justin feels this record has been truer to themselves than ever before.

"We're always portrayed as a very serious Scots rock band and we're just not, at least I fuckin' hope not. This is a trivial pathetic job being a so-called 'pop star', how can you take

rightly stick with it. So what were the first two records?

"Like I said, we were so preoccupied with getting it right, making it sound like something rather than letting it sound like us. We weren't really a band at that point. The second time round we got paranoid about making it successful, it had to be del Amitri like the last one. Now we don't give a fuck, I'm 30 years old, not a trendy music fan so I can't sight the hip and the unhip."

So are you entirely happy with the outcome?

"Pretty much, this album was recorded the way they should be done. Everyone will be thinking we spent time getting it right and took ages to do it, but we started in January last year then threw out all the stuff we'd done. I dunno, that's a process we always seem to have to go through - weird. Then we started again in April and two and a half months later we were done - we've always been quite a lazy bunch."

Twisted is released on February 27th and March sees a warm up tour of England and one date at Glasgow's Barras on the 19th. The tour then takes in most of the other continents of the world before returning here later in the year. The obligatory Christmas Barras show has been confirmed, providing none of the band win the lottery in the meantime.

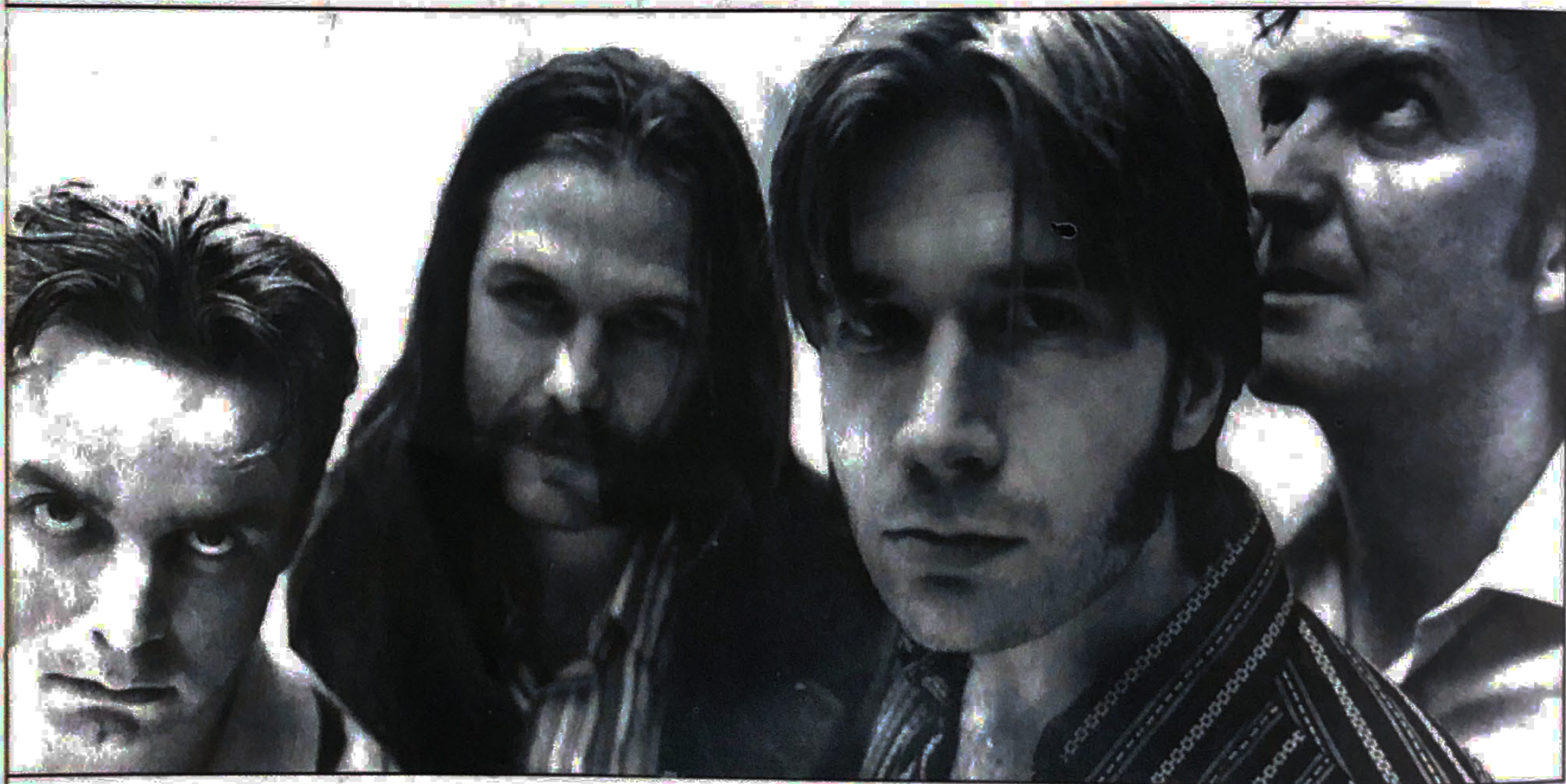
You didn't tour much last year. "Nah, we did festivals, it was the summer of festivals." You did Woodstock and our very own T-in-the-Park. How did they

into the arena. This was the first time anybody had really done anything other than play so far, they were firing pyrotechnics and the lead singer shot his mike stand into the audience then got his knob out. Then we came on!"

Ah yes, how do you follow that? T-in-the-Park was kinda the same, though. You came after Crowded House and the big criticism of the day was that you and they are too similar, only they have better onstage patter than you do.

"Yeh, I have a big problem with patter, it's difficult to talk to two thousand people directly. I don't like that, I mean what can you say that hasn't already been said and sound sincere? I can muster a 'How you doin', do you feel ok', then pretend that it's a cliché which is actually quite clichéd itself. It would help us a lot if I was a bit better, but I heard a story that really frightened me once: Sean Perin's brother Michael is a singer - quite a good one actually, but his banter was crap. So, for his last tour he learnt all his lines for between the songs. The support band had sussed this, taped a gig, learnt the lines and did them all during their performance. Poor Mike didn't know they'd done it and went on using all the same lines, but couldn't work out why everyone was laughing at him!" So now you know why Justin doesn't speak much between songs, not that it matters.

"one of the most significant album releases from a Scottish act this year."



it so seriously? That's not false modesty, I think our songs have always been very morose and profound but at least there's a happy song on this album."

'Twisted', happy? Hmm - but when you give it more than a once over it is definitely del Amitri and isn't drenched in influences. After almost eight years in the business they've found their own sound and should

compare?

"I didn't enjoy Woodstock, but T-in-the-Park, as festivals go, was great, the crowd were better, real music fans, but Woodstock was like a tourist event, a big corporate business affair to make as much money as possible. Apart from that we bombed at Woody, the band before us, Jackal I think, gave this big rant about the no fags or booze being allowed

That gives you the the gen on what's going to be the biggest year yet for one of Glasgow's most misunderstood premier rock outfits. For what it's worth, the dels, although I have admired their work, have never been a favourite band of mine. However, that could all change with what is set to be one of the most significant album releases from a Scottish act this year.