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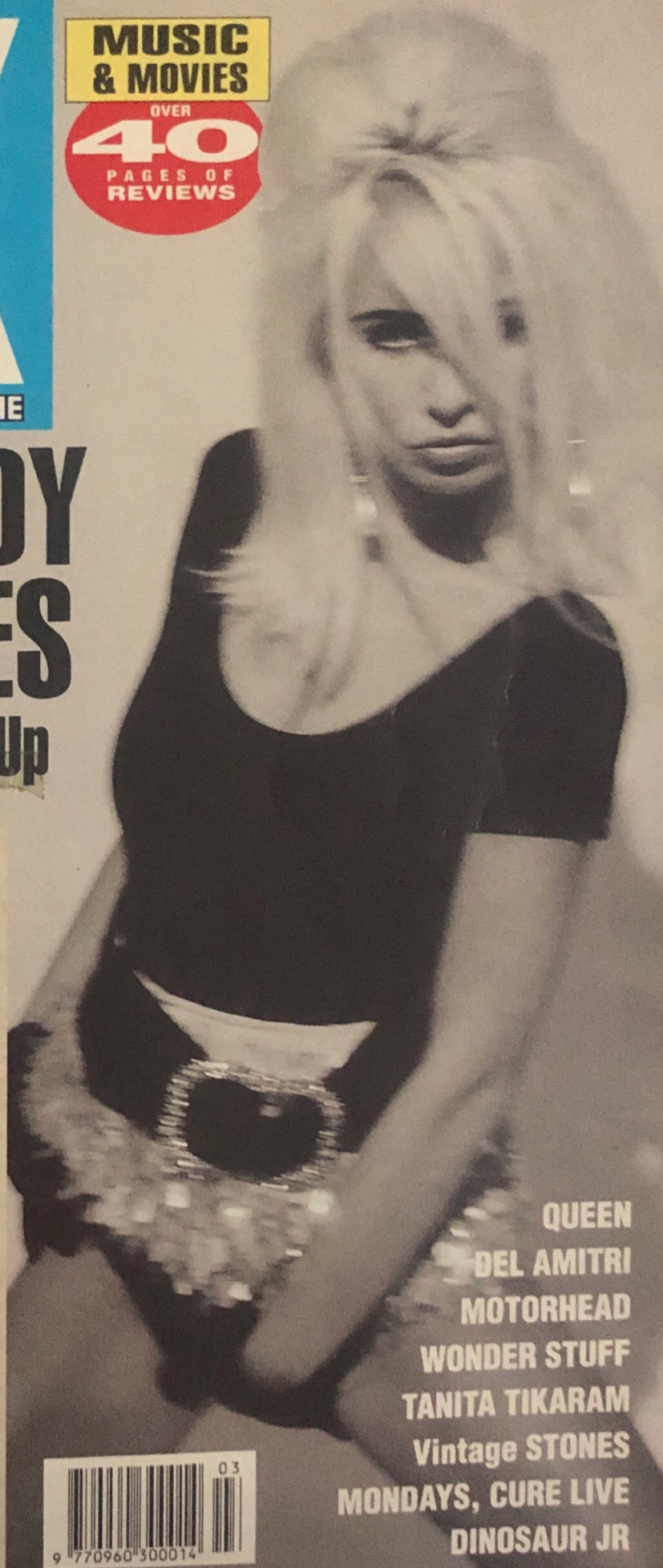
RECORDS

THAT

SHOOK

THE WORLD

Part One



QUEEN
DEL AMITRI
MOTORHEAD
WONDER STUFF
TANITA TIKARAM
Vintage STONES
MONDAYS, CURE LIVE
DINOSAUR JR





THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN: DEL AMITRI. GLASGOW'S FAVOURITE SONS (WELL SECOND COUSINS, AT LEAST) RETURNED TO THEIR ROOTS. FLUSH WITH THE SUCCESS OF 'SPIT IN THE RAIN', (GOSH, HOW UNCOUTH), TO ENTERTAIN THE RAVING TEENS AT THE FAMED BARROWLANDS. HERSCHELL HERSEY COMPOSED THE WORDS. IAIN DICKSON TOOK THE SNAPS

This is Wednesday so it must be Glasgow and being Glasgow, some special transport has been laid on to ferry del Amitri to their after-show soiree. As a limousine rumbles past the flashing neon frontage of the Barrowland Ballroom, where the group have just completed the second of three sell-out dates, singer Justin Currie and guitarist David Cummings stride round the corner and into the backseat of a waiting Vauxhall Nova.

"You must be used to getting mobbed by now," offers the driver with more than a hint of sarcasm. Currie, who has just seen off the attentions of half a dozen teenage girls - two of whom tried, unsuccessfully, to borrow £10 for a taxi - is philosophical. "We don't get mobbed, we get mildly hassled," he reflects. "We don't inspire hysteria, we inspire listeria."

The ride, it transpires, comes courtesy of two long-term del Amitri fans. "This is April and this is Pauline," Currie says, gesturing vaguely towards the front

seat. "They were the first people ever to write to us, so we went to their mum and dad's for mince and tatties."

"It was skirrie, actually," says either April or Pauline, as the Nova trundles uncertainly towards the Tron theatre. In convoy behind is a rental car containing the group's latest adoptees - three Australian fans who have flown from Brisbane to follow them round Britain.

It is a strange kind of homecoming for the group, who are just one night away from completing a tour which has

kept them busy for over a year. Friday morning will be the first time in fourteen months that the group have not had their day planned out for them. Before the show, guitarist Iain Harvie explained: "Your whole day is timetabled, you get up at this time, soundcheck at this time, eat at this time, party afterwards. And you get quite used to it. It's an Okay way of living because you don't have to think about anything. But it's a bit of a shock transition when

you stop. You get up and think, 'Oh I don't have to do anything, will I go to bed again?' We're going to make an intense effort to get really bored."

"One of the best things about this year is that we've never been bored," adds Currie. "But that's the main thing that makes you want to go out and make a record, thinking there's no good records out there. Probably by Saturday afternoon we'll be at that stage again."

The toil has not been in vain. 1990 began for del Amitri with the release of

pop. They flopped, went to America and stopped washing. Then something altogether noisier and more confident was born - hence 'Waking Hours', Thin Lizzy and the two frightening visages now causing neck-craning and mild consternation in the foyer of the Copthorne Hotel. It is just an hour to showtime, but neither of del Amitri's main songwriters looks concerned. Currie is sipping tea through Amos Brearley side-whiskers and Harvie is bemoaning the fact that there's no time to watch *Total Recall*, which has just come on the hotel's cable TV channel.

Currie is aware that changes in the group might be construed as a betrayal. He equates their metamorphosis - somewhat disingenuously - to that of the Soup Dragons, who took guitar driven pop to an unlikely destination.

"Loads of people have accused us of selling out since we had a hit single," he says, with a rare hint of exasperation. "How could we have sold out? We always wanted to have hit singles, we just deserve them now because we're making better records."

"If it was a different band for the people who saw us, it wasn't a different band for us," says Harvie. "We didn't go away and reinvent it. We all had jobs, drank too much and started buying old records - an it just kind of transmuted into what it's become now."

To understand del Amitri's success, it is important to appreciate their failure. Their experience with Chrysalis is now rationalised by Currie as "the same thing that goes wrong with every young band. We made the album, the person that signed us left. We didn't have a working relationship with a record company." He



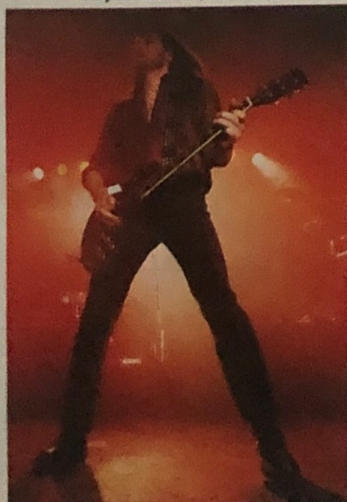
Good rockin' tonight: del Amitri get rockadocious



"Two pints o' heavy and a packet o' crisps. Pleeze"

NO SLEEP TI

Eat your heart out, Thin Lizzy



Finger pickin' good: Harvie pines on pedal steel



the dour, downbeat anthem of futility and solitude, 'Nothing Ever Happens'. It ended with 600,000 copies of their album 'Waking Hours' selling worldwide - 260,000 of them in the UK.

However, if success is new, the group is not. Many will recall their previous incarnation as the earnest, young rockers who released an LP to general indifference on Chrysalis subsidiary Big Star. Those with even better memories will remember their debut 'Senselessness', a post-Postcard 45, on the shortlived No Strings label. It's hard to square these memories with the group who will begin their set this evening with a disturbingly precise, legs-akimbo cover of the old Thin Lizzy chest-beater, 'The Boys Are Back In Town'.

The myth of del Amitri is that of the Ugly Duckling in reverse. They started out as clean-cut, pretty, middle class Glasgow boys playing winsome guitar

says the group's behaviour at this time was less than mature. "We would rally fans around us to try and keep our spirits up, even to the point where, for God's sake," he laughs, as the memories flood back, "we were going to stage a fan sit-in at Chrysalis if they didn't let us off the label. We printed 2000 leaflets. It was exactly the kind of thing that would make a record company say Right, we're never dropping you."

Chrysalis relented before the group's terror campaign got under way. The group returned to Glasgow and eventually were to embark on an ill-advised, but not unimportant tour of the less celebrated venues of the USA. "I went back to washing dishes in the restaurant I used to work in," Currie recalls. "I had left the restaurant when I got a record deal. Two years later I was washing dishes again. After America I got a job as a waiter, which was like a real step



"Are you sure you didn't leave the gas on?" "Def. Shite - I didn't cancel the milk though." del Amitri come to terms with the everyday mundanity of touring

ALL GLASGOW

up. It was one of the best times of my life. Far better than any of the time we spent touring or on Chrysalis, 'cos we were just dead unhappy then. We didn't really believe that we were that good a live band. We tried really hard and it was very frustrating, so it was dead good to be a waiter."

Harvie drove a van at Glasgow's fruit market. "That was quite a good education, to be surrounded by all these wide sharks and nutcases," he says.

"His lot used to come into the restaurant where I worked and act like animals. They'd take their clothes off," reveals a highly amused Currie.

"I used to like Christmas," Harvie recalls. "They used to go into restaurants and order three crates of beer. You'd see the jaws dropping. No don't bring the menu, bring the beer, then bring the menu. I left when the guy next to me was hit in the face with a lasagne. You

see, the rock 'n' roll life does exist, but not in rock 'n' roll - it all goes on in the fruit industry."

The way it's told, del Amitri's tour of American toilets was the self-revelatory experience which transformed their fortunes. As usual, the reality is less clear-cut. Harvie says, "Basically it was a complete nightmare, but it was an amazing place we had always wanted to go to. You find yourself being overwhelmed by the place and also in love with the idea of having no money and travelling for hours down these freeways, not knowing if we were going to make it to the show."

"It was the *Spinal Tap* experience, but on an even lower level," says Currie. "We'd have loved to have been supporting the puppet show."

"The Americans don't care what category of rock 'n' roll band you fit into," explains Harvie. "These people per-

ceived us as a rock 'n' roll band, which was something that had never crossed our minds. We were 500 steps down from Bruce Springsteen, but we were still on the same ladder."

"That opened our eyes," says Currie. "Nearly all our songs would have wee riffs in them and then a bit where the riff would go a bit mad. They were just bits, but we would do them and everyone would clap. We would think, 'F***, that was a guitar solo.' And we never realised where the choruses were."

"If America taught us anything," Harvie concludes philosophically, "it's that you can write an original song which consists of a chorus, a few verses, a bridge and may be a four bar sphinctophone solo."

As the sound of support act The Big Dish thumps through the wall, former Bluebell and guest harmonica player Ken McCluskey arrives with glad tidings

- Tuesday's show has been given the thumbs up in the *Glasgow Herald*. Currie, meanwhile, tries on a gold lame jacket. John Reid, the group's normally reserved manager leaps up, booming "Scuse me, not this one," in mock-cockney and bearing down on the *Via* photographer. The jacket is discarded and Justin starts opening Christmas cards. "Oh, I thought this said 'Have a cool and junkie Christmas'. But it's 'hunky Christmas'. Hmm."

Reid settles back on the *Clockwork Orange* settee, and resumes his non-interventionist stance. No relation to the Reid who handles Elton John, he has worked with del Amitri for just over a year, though he first came into contact with them when Tom Verlaine - then under his charge - was hired to produce tracks on the Chrysalis LP. He also manages Gil Norton, who produced 'Move Away Jimmy Blue' on 'Waking Hours'.