



Meatpuppets

“I worship this band”

Cris phones from Phoenix

Cris Kirkwood (bass player and singer for the Meatpuppets) is speaking to me from his home in Phoenix, Arizona. He speaks frantically to get his point across, puffing between phrases to take in some air, then he starts off again. I get the feeling he has too much in his brain and must rush to get it out before he overloads. He is very passionate about what he says, and usually repeats himself several times to make sure he has got his point across. I also hear the plucktations of a guitar in the background, he is tweaking this frantically as well, the whole conversation is very speedy, it's kinda like talking to someone really drunk at a party, and like talking to drunks at a party it's hard to keep up with and to hear all the words, especially if you're on a speaker phone and speaking to someone who is in the middle of the Arizona desert.

The Meatpuppets (Cris, his brother Curt, who plays guitar and sings also and drummer Derrick Bostron) have been around since the early 80s and have an impressive back catalogue of records on SST, beginning with their 1982 debut *Meatpuppets* and including the marvellous *Monsters* album in 1989.

The Meatpuppets are mentioned in the same genre as other 80s post punkers like the Minutemen and Husker Du. There are no outside influences to their music, it's pure, organic and a wee bit spooky as well. Sweet vocal harmonies from the Kirkwood brothers with a quirky country-hillbilly flavour, eerie melodious guitar, all wrapped in a smelly punk rock package. When I listen to their music I think of campfires, full moons, coyotes and the sparseness of the desert. Hell, the Meatpuppets make desert music.

Cris agrees with my description of the desert and its influences on their music. "It's all that and more," he states simply (for once).

The Meatpuppet's music is also full of out of the ordinary lyrical content, songs about monsters (as opposed to 'boy loves girl' lyrics), cats, sheep and dogs, songs about everyday subjects looked upon with fresh eyes.

"I think the songs about monsters are the ones about boy loves girl [laughs], we don't like to put our songs into categories, we're too moody, self-conscious and self-indulgent as to stoop so low as to get specific."

Too High To Die is the Meatpuppet's latest album, and charming it is, being slightly more polished than other

efforts and having even more mellow effects of the desert seeping into their music. Whenever a new album by a band comes out the bios are always saying "This is their best yet!" Yeah, yeah, so is this their best yet? Cris puts the hype into perspective.

"Nah! By whose standards? By MTV standards? The radio's standards? It's our newest. I just never cared about that, you just pin yourself into a corner, and I've always wanted more out of my music than that. I want more out of it than just making albums y'know, I stopped caring about that sorta stuff a long time ago. There's no such thing as good and bad, people just make that stuff up so they can live by it 'cause they need to 'cause they're helpless little pig zombies from Uranus and then they go back to their little fudge factories from which they sprang and between times they go {adopts helium voice} 'good, bad, good, bad.'"

Has the fact that you haven't conformed to any trends or particular musical directions helped your musical career?

"Oh, absolutely, it's just too obvious that if you want to apply yourself to one little movement you're... {trails off}. We're more about what it's like to be alive, as opposed to being a rock musician. It just happens to be our mode of expression, the career side of it is just incidental, the fact that we sell it, I mean signing to a major label is just something that came up."

It kinda came to you instead of you going to it?

"Yeah, y'know we work within it to a certain degree but we don't let it get in the way of what we're doing. I mean we gave ourselves a name which is a concession, we speak the language which is a concession. I couldn't care less about what anyone else is doing. I pay attention to music but most things, especially in rock is so gross, all I can see is these little white weasels, and chest pounding men and women."

How important is what you're doing to you?

"I fuckin' worship the band and I can say that objectively as a member, but still, the band is something that's beyond me, it's a special thing, I think it's [excitement] — it's a motherfucker! For me it's pure wonder... I sound like a preacher!"

Ahhh, pure honesty, unpretentiousness and no gimmicks, and the record's good too!

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