

MY LIFE AS A JOKE

There's somebody I know who, whenever a Bloodhound Gang song comes on television, is gripped by a trance-like, maniacal fury — her eyes glaze over, her face reddens and starts twitching, her hands ball into fists, and by the time the first 'the roof, the roof, the roof is on fire...' line is over, she's hissing through clenched teeth, 'Not... that... stupid... #*%... idiot!' that's the cue for whatever comes to hand to turn into an airborne projectile, and it's advisable to get the hell out of the way or risk injury in the crossfire.



Bloodhound Gang

But not all reactions to Jimmy Pop Ali are quite so severe. With the Bloodhound Gang's chart success in this country, there's obviously plenty of people who really like the guy's goofball style; though come to think of it his persona — some sort of Peewee Herman/Howard Stern/*Beavis and Butthead* hybrid — is rather irritating. Still, it's worth remembering that most images in the entertainment world are illusory, and Jimmy Pop knows this as well as anybody.

"When I met Marilyn Manson, they were sitting talking about their favourite kind of makeup. Their new guitarist, ZimZum, used to work for Chanel so he introduced the rest of the band to Chanel products. They're sitting there saying [adopts Mansonesque Goth voice], 'I like wearing Chanel better than Maybelline because my face doesn't break out.' It was so boring — where are the babies being eaten?"

"That's the weirdest thing about hanging out with other bands. We played a show with Better Than Ezra — they're singing all these heartfelt love songs, and we're down at the bar of the hotel until 3am and all [BTE's singer] wanted to do was talk about the area between the asshole and the balls; 'Smells like fuckin' cheese and onion dip!' Of course, that's what I'm all about, but I can't see this being the same guy that sings those songs. Gavin from Bush was the same. I expected him to come up and be like [sings], 'ooh wahh laaaa could've loved you more...', but he was, 'Yeah, motherfucker, fuckin' right, fuck fuck fuck.' It kind of blows their persona for me."

Of course, Jimmy Pop, in the real world, is not the overgrown hyperactive juvenile that he appears. Though the strains of adolescent humour that run through the twelve songs on *One Fierce Beer Coaster* range from plain dumb ('I Wish I Was Queer So I Could Get Chicks') to stupidly offensive ('Kiss Me Where It Smells Funny'), the lyrics weren't just off-the-cuff witty verbal feats

executed in the studio. Jimmy, who has a degree from Temple University in Philadelphia (where Bill Cosby also graduated), spent months in front of a computer writing the gags.

"My lyrics are what I think is funny. I'm kind of Jekyll and Hyde about it. The things we talk about as we're sitting around drinking Heinekens and watching bad Scott Baio movies are the same things we put on our record... but at the same time, I spent three months writing those lyrics, so there is a strategy to it. But we're not, ahhh, Christians or anything."

It's sometimes difficult to tell if the Bloodhound Gang are attempting a pastiche of white rockers flirting with hip hop, or whether they're just aiming for lowest-common denominator dumb and using any vehicle to get there. You can clearly draw a line from the Beastie Boys *Licensed To Ill* to the latest from the Bloodhound Gang, although with the latter, it's only white culture, sounds and concerns that are addressed. However, where the Bloodhound Gang differ from vintage Beasties is that it is the humour — not the message (there is none) nor the medium (it's only a backdrop for jokes anyway) — that counts. You know, like a joke band.

"As far as being a novelty act, whenever you put humour over music you fall into that category. But the way we see it is that it lets us do all different styles of music and get away with it, kind of like being stupid is the cohesive link between the songs, the continuity."

I like the Beastie Boys first record, but they lost a lot of their edge by being politically correct and singing about things that 30 year old men care about."

And it doesn't matter too much to him that humorous material has a notoriously limited lifespan (Presidents Of The Who?), and most artists are unlikely to be much more than two or three-hit wonders.

"We're not going for any kind of credibil-

ity, and that was never our plan. The way I see it is that guy Weird Al Yankovic is still around, so we'll do it until people don't want to hear it any more. I mean, I don't want to be doing it when I'm 30 because then I might start singing about Tibet like the Beastie Boys, and I don't want any of that going on. But we'll be able to put out a few more records."

What people either forget or don't know, *One Fierce Beer Coaster* is the second album from the Bloodhound Gang. The first, *Use Your Fingers*, was released in 1995 by Columbia Records, and featured Jimmy, his humour and two collaborators. It was all samples and programming, and no live instruments (the current line-up was the old touring act, and the live vibe informed the direction change). The album failed dismally, and consequently Bloodhound Gang were dropped by the label.

"We're doing at least another album for Geffen, but if not we could always go back to Columbia because now that this album's selling, the first one's selling. They didn't even need to reissue it because they had so many in the warehouse sitting there collecting dust, they just popped them back on the market."

"Personally, I don't think I will do more than four records, 'cause you can only talk about poop so many times. If our next record doesn't sell, that's fine by me. We've been pretty lucky because it's different singles doing well in different places — it doesn't mean we have any kind of longevity but it does give me a little bit of hope. If not, you'll see me in front of your house selling crack."

Sure. But Jimmy has other career ideas, and he may not be joking; "I wouldn't mind making some really low-budget dumb movies too. Pseudo arthouse."

Currently, the Bloodhound Gang are still in the midst of touring. They've already completed two USA and Canadian tours this year

— one, in line with their political incorrectness, was sponsored by a chewing tobacco company. Jimmy feels no need to justify this.

"Usually, the people that are prone to chew tobacco aren't very smart anyway, so I see no problem if they're not able to talk any more."

But within the show itself, Jimmy says there's not much that could corrupt their predominantly young audience, at least no more than what's on their albums. "I don't think we'll be doing any weird sort of Marilyn Manson things. In the past, sometimes we'd get naked, but we'd never throw poop or anything weird like that. What our plan is, because we don't have that extreme amount of talent that our peers on major labels do, is jump around a lot and people are tricked into being entertained."

Which is what you can expect when they bring the show to New Zealand (where Jimmy will search for the Thompson Twins. He's a big fan, he says), though there could be a slight change of direction on the cards.

"What we're trying to do now is kind of hard... it's two things that weren't meant to go together — mixing up a live band and sampling technology, trying to integrate them a little and make it a little more seamless."

Now, hold on Jimmy — two things that weren't meant to go together? Surely nearly everyone is mixing the live instruments and sampling now — even the Spice Girls.

"I want to be Posh Spice! Did you know that Victoria doesn't like smiling because it makes her nose look big?"

He's getting into character, and is seemingly unstoppable, now.

"That's one group I haven't come in contact with, and I'd be afraid because I know the Adidas bitch could kick my ass."

Now, that's something my friend with the violently Pavlovian reaction to Jimmy would definitely love to see.

TROY FERGUSON