

Garbage singer Shirley Manson isn't alone in holding rock 'n' roll VIP status at Melbourne's stately Hilton On The Park hotel this particular weekend. Over a 24 hour period, Steve Earle and the Dukers, Portishead's Geoff Barrow, and country legend Kenny Rogers will stroll through the lobby as they go about their

business. Earle owns the best beer belly, Barrow sports the best goatee, Rogers boasts the best plastic surgery, and Manson, as she will announce later, has "the best of everything."

On the third Sunday in April, Manson arrived in Melbourne at five in the morning, off a direct flight from Europe. She headed straight to the Hilton and slept "non-stop" for 23 hours, in preparation for five gruelling days of work promoting Garbage's captivating second album, *Version 2.0*. While Manson is in Australia, she'll conduct countless radio, television, and press interviews, endure several magazine photo shoots, and appear at at least two 'meet-and-greet' schmooze-fests. If there is time, Manson will be allowed to sit down for lunch.

When Garbage unveiled their self titled debut album in 1995, they were widely heralded as the band belonging to Butch Vig, the Madison, Wisconsin studio whizz who produced Nirvana's *Nevermind* and the Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream*. Four million copies of *Garbage* and five worldwide hit singles later, in the eyes of fans, Garbage is Shirley Manson. And with the worldwide release of *Version 2.0* only weeks away, Manson is certainly in demand.

Garbage's American label, Almo, and Mushroom (Europe, Australasia, Asia) are co-ordinating an extensive marketing schedule that they hope will have the western world living and breathing Garbage for the foreseeable future. Their un-secret weapon at the forefront of this global assault is the instantly charming Manson, who has had only one week at home in Edinburgh with her husband since Christmas. The rest of the time she has been travelling and talking the talk. After Manson leaves Australia, it's on to Singapore to do it all over again. "I'm very extroverted and talk about anything to anybody, anytime, anywhere," she says.

Manson soaks up most of

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her second day in Melbourne at a photographic studio in a quiet residential street in Fitzroy, five minutes drive from the inner city. With her first photo shoot complete, Manson settles down for her third interview of the day. Genuinely friendly, Manson has a hearty laugh, a Scottish accent you could melt in, and an unaffected disposition free of ego or pretension. And surprisingly, despite arguably being the most glamorous female pop icon of the last half of the twentieth century, she doesn't much like having her photo taken.

"Coming into different countries where you have often no idea of the photographer's work and have no control over the outcome, I find that sick inducing. You're leaving it to them to represent your music a lot of the time, and if they get it wrong, you feel you're being misrepresented, and that's a horrible feeling."

I've seen your schedule for the next few days, it's pretty severe, there's a lot of photography involved.

"[Laughter] Severe is a good word."

Do you have to psyche yourself up to face all this?

"I can handle all the interviewing, it's the photographs that I find difficult to stomach. Interviews are something I understand I have to do and we're very lucky that people the world over want to speak to us about our record. But the photographing side of thing torments me, I hate it, it almost makes me feel physically sick, it makes me feel so bad about myself. I have absolutely no control over it."

Having been away from home doing promotion, basically since Christmas, what do you pine for most?

"I miss getting up in the morning and being able to fix myself breakfast, or make myself a cup of coffee the way I like my coffee made, things like that. I live by the sea and every morning I can usually go downstairs and look at the ocean, and I can't do that. Instead I look at the inside of a hotel room. But, you know what, I am a lucky devil, I love what I do, and I love being able to do it, and the down sides can be a little gruesome, but for the most part I have a fabulous life, so I don't wanna sit here and moan about it because I've got it good. I have the best of everything I could want at the moment."

Does your husband like your life?

"[Laughter] He feels a little less better off than I am [laughter], and I think he's horny as hell."

He'd be great friends with his right hand.

"I'm sure [laughter], very great friends!"

Garbage spent 364 days making the new album, as a band have you gained any perspective on it since completion?

"No way, I haven't listened to it since we finished it. I don't think when you've made something, you're ever the best person to ask about it — that's why we like travelling and meeting lots of really smart journalists because they end up giving us a lot of great quotes [laughter], so we just think, 'yeah, that's what we're trying to do, we'll steal that quote from you.' It's very hard to be objective about your own work."

Are you nerv—

"Yes! [Laughter] Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! I'm more interested in the public reaction than critically, but it's a

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funny, weird concept. One side of me doesn't give a fuck, and one side of me is aware that without success you have lost artistic freedom in some ways, ie. we could never have gone into the studio for a year without worrying about paying bills, without worrying about holding down a day job, if it hadn't been for the fact we sold four million copies of our last record. And that afforded us this incredible luxury, and we love that so we don't want to give that up. So, one side of you is anxious that your record isn't gonna do as well as your last one, and it's difficult to work on something that you love, and then feed it to the press and they butcher it, that's always difficult to stomach, but at the end of the day, we know that we made a good record, and we know that ultimately it's irrelevant what other people think, and irrelevant what people feel towards it because we did it ultimately for ourselves, it was a selfish pursuit. Even if we're not lucky and the record doesn't do well, I don't think we'll feel that we failed ourselves, I think we did as much as we possibly could, and the rest of it is in the lap of the gods."

You've gone streets ahead in being more personal with the lyrics on this record.

"Very much so. When I first joined the band I didn't really know the men in the band very well and I felt uncomfortable around them. It took me a while to assert myself in the group dynamic and I felt duty bound to take on board their ideas lyrically and work around them. I would take lines from each of them and then augment them with my own words. This time round they trusted me implicitly and they left me to my own devices. I felt that on the last record the words were a little cold and distant and voyeuristic, and a little unsophisticated, I didn't think they were as good as they could've been. On this record, even though they are way more personal and way more introspective, I think they're more ambiguous, you can read things into them, they're not literal, they're not stories, they're just touching on feelings and creating an atmosphere."

Is it fair to say you're more confident of your role within the band this time round?

"Definitely. On the last record I wrote a lot of the lyrics, but I felt subconsciously I had to please the guys in the band, I didn't want to let them down. I chose much more to be true to myself this time round rather than trying to please anybody. I didn't care this time because I knew that ultimately we would be comfortable because they trust me, and they share a sensibility with me. I'm way more upfront than they are, they're horrified sometimes by the things I say in day to day life that I don't think is a big deal, simple things like, 'oh, sorry I'm a bitch I'm on my period,' to somebody who is a stranger, they'd be