

few people that we'd consider followers, true bad dudes."

So how come New Plymouth has got such an ugly reputation? The boys mutter something about the wrong people doing the talking.

Craig says the "sexist New Plymouth" tag was largely due to Sticky Filth's *Weep Woman Weep*, the cover art and the words to a couple of songs. I say that I'm a feminist but I don't find the Filth's songs offensive. The infamous 'Dig You Up' was just schlock-rock horror. Craig says he doesn't write songs to be funny but how anyone could take those lines seriously enough to take offense is beyond me. As for 'Weep Woman Weep' (a great song, now a staple of local covers bands), surely anyone can hear that the singer (in the character of the song) is hating himself as much as the woman who broke his heart. By now it's late afternoon and time for the interview to wind up if Mairi's going to get her photographs. We say our goodbyes. Nigel gives me some gothic band stickers and promises to send me a copy of *Welcome To Ward Thirteen*, the fanzine/comic he's doing with some friends and I vow to remember the name Nefarious.

Four years down the track, Sticky Filth are tired of talking about *Weep Woman Weep* but they oblige with some more history when we meet at Chris' flat later that afternoon. Chris tells me 'Dig You Up' prompted a letter from a group of three called People Against Pornography who threatened to take the song to the Human Rights Commission.

Says Chris, "We wrote back and told them what we thought about it and that was that. We didn't hear anything else about it."

Five years on their music is changing, still delivered with trademark Sticky Filth venom but, Chris suggests, maybe a bit more refined, with some slower songs in the set. With Paul on drums since last February, Sticky Filth are well pleased with their line-up and the musical changes going on. Craig is a little more forthcoming on the subject of his newer lyrics.

"I don't really write my songs about relationships purposefully, because you live a life and you relate with people and of course songs are a bit about it unless you write a song about a tree or something. Sometimes I write a song like 'Vodka, The Devil and Me', that's a song about a story. Or 'Mother', that's about mother earth and that's because I feel that way. I don't know what the others feel like, but it takes all three of us — when we make the music we feel happy about, it comes out in a good way."

Sticky Filth are arguably the most popular band in the New Plymouth "scene". They fill venues whenever they headline and have sold out both *Weep Woman Weep* and *Nectar of the Gods*. The only thing they lack is a recording contract and with their track record they are understandably peeved that no local labels have expressed the slightest interest in their work.

"What's a record label trying to do? Get a band and sell records. We're a band and we sell records but they're not interested," says Craig.

Not that this has stopped Sticky Filth from releasing product. Unfortunately their self-financed release programme has temporarily ground to a halt and they're two albums behind thanks to a certain Australian pressing plant with underhand business tactics. The company took Sticky Filth's money and their master tapes and promptly went under, test pressings were

melted down, they never got their money back. So much for selling records in Australia to earn Australian dollars to get more pressed to bring back to New Zealand. Fortunately, their 1990 Australian tour proved more successful, the Filth played with the Hard Ons and filled pubs in their own right.

"We need to go back to Australia," says Craig. "We need to get out of New Zealand. We beat the track around New Zealand all the time and it's just the same thing. What you need to do is treat Sydney and Melbourne as part of your tour, every few months go to Auckland, then to Sydney for a few weeks, back to New Plymouth to get the band as high as it will go. You have to go and base yourselves in Sydney and from Sydney jump over to Europe. That's what happens with bands like the Hard Ons and Cosmic Psychos. Playing New Zealand, 0.9 per cent of the people that



Sticky Filth: Paul, Chris and Craig and roadie Damon

are ever going to dig your music may work out to a thousand people. Go to Germany, you've got 0.9 of the population, but that's a million people."

Craig says the Filth are going to do some new recording soon. You get the impression they're at a crossroads, they've done the ground work, they've got a healthy local fan base and some overseas interest, they've grown up in the last five years and they'd like more people to know where they're at now. Providing they can find a producer who suits them.

"The second record didn't have the gutsy production of the first even though it was mixed by the same guy," opines Craig. "We find it hard to get someone who can produce our records. It would be good to get on a label, but they start telling you what to do and I'm real sceptical of people. I'm not giving anything away to some guy I don't even know."

Meanwhile, the Filth, like all the other bands I spoke to, are happy enough in New Plymouth, the general opinion being that it's a great place to live and play music. There's a high level of interconnection and mutual support between bands, people standing in for missing members or belonging to several bands at once, they party together and roadie for each other. No female presence in the bands, though, not even in the organisational/lighting/mixing capacities.

Monday afternoon and Mairi and I are due to leave town the next morning. I'm hanging aimlessly around the White Hart before we set out to photograph Warp Spasm when Alastair from Tension turns up to give me a band bio. With half an hour to spare, we decide to have a drink. He gets my interest when he tells me that he likes to sit on Queen Street and do that head trip thing where you speculate that all the people walking by only exist for as long as you notice them, where do they go, who are they, who cares? This is the kind of dizzy thought I like, so the proverbial chord is struck.

Hard-core thrash metallers Tension formed four years ago, playing with Sticky Filth, Toxic Avengers and local boys made reasonably good in Sydney, Casualty. Although guitarist Kelly is totally into death metal, Alastair and his brother Paul are into rap and prefer the lyrics of bands like Public Enemy to the death metal inanities dished up by Deicide (the other members of Tension are third Tattersall brother Jason on bass and Chris from Sticky Filth on guitar).

"It's really easy to write about shit, anybody can write about Satan in five minutes," says Alastair.

Thus 'Negative's Decay' is about media trivialisation of important issues and 'Grin And Bear It' — about abuse from a woman's point of view — was written with the help of a female friend.

Tension pull the same crowd as Sticky Filth and a lot of

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