

Interview - Screamefeeder

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For Brisbane residents, it's difficult to consider Screamefeeder in any context other than the local.

Bass player / vocalist Kellie Lloyd is on the other end of the line when I call Q-Music (Tym Guitars before that) and I couldn't count how many times I've bumped into her at shows, onstage and off. Likewise, at least once a fortnight, I see guitarist / vocalist Tim Steward in the paper or read him in my inbox. Drummer extraordinaire Dean Shwerek played on a friend's record just the other week. Every time I drive past Barbecues Galore in Woolloongabba, I think to myself that's where Screamefeeder started. So while Tim may describe his band as insular in our interview, in Brisbane Screamefeeder feel close to hand, they're in the streets. They are the city's indie-rock group that have always been there. I'm sure your hometown has one too.

Yet Screamefeeder are also one of the city's tragedies. Plagued by all the circumstantial dramas associated with rock and roll (bad luck, bad timing, bad industry), the band is one of those that never seems quite as successful as it should be. During 2007's Pig City Festival, I distinctly remember watching author Andrew Stafford dancing front row like a mad man but I myself stood further back, unable to shake the feeling that Screamefeeder had more in common with headliners The Saints than I'd prefer. Would Screamefeeder also have to wait thirty years to get their due? It was a sobering moment. Not long after, the band went on hiatus.

Two years later, they all seem well. There are solo projects, new bands (Tim with [We All Want To](#), Kellie has [White Mansions](#)) and – happily – Screamefeeder are back in action to celebrate the reissue of one of their finest records (1996's [Kitten Licks](#)) with a 'Don't Look Back' styled tour booked to boot.

When I spoke to Tim Steward about the upcoming [Kitten Licks](#) tour [which we ranted about already - Ed] he seemed utterly unperturbed by the rough and tumble of the music business and history. His responses were much as I'd expected: upbeat and relaxed, not unlike any other hobbyist musician I'd run into out on the pavement.

How did this idea to play [Kitten Licks](#) in its entirety come about?

Really, it just came about from idle chatter. In typical Screamfeeder style we just talked about the resurgence of 90s bands and 'Don't Look Back' one day, but then we kept talking about it until the shows came to fruition. It's a great idea, because everyone nowadays listens to music from such a broad range of years. I really see young people doing their research and finding out about obscure bands from the '80s and '90s and it's really refreshing.

How has it been re-learning some of this older material? Any surprises?

(Laughs) Not too hard in the end. I was kinda worried, but no - it's been fine. It was funny though, we got together and listened to the new edition of the album, with all the b-sides. Suddenly after the final track 'Pigtails on a Rock' ended, there was another song - slam! - called 'Harlan'. Kellie almost pissed herself, she hadn't even heard it since 1997.

Speaking of the new reissue, what's on there?

Well it's got all the b-sides on it basically. We decided not to touch the EQ, though it would have been tempting. The only two tracks that wouldn't fit are the Husker Du and Come covers from the 'Gravity' single. But they're available with the digital version of the album. We ran with most of the Australian versions of the songs, and a couple from the American issue of the album - they'd been mastered differently for America. No big differences though.

You still fond of the album thirteen years on?

Very fond, yes. But we're like parents, and all our children are special in their own way. For me it'd be out of this one, *Rocks on the Soul* and *Fill Yourself with Music*. Our middle period (laughs).



Screamfeeder - 'Gravity'

The title of the album comes from a line in 'Dead To The World', as well, I imagine, the inspiration behind the canaries and kitten on the album's artwork. Was that song a centre point of sorts?

It's one of our absolute faves, both to play, and - for me anyway - lyrically. The lyrics were stolen in part from lines in *Shampoo Planet* by Douglas Coupland. But not all of it, just the last verse and chorus - (laughs) not much. We always use a lyric for the album title and this was the one which seemed to resonate the most. There was a different cover on the US edition, a picture of a tornado. We thought about using something big and brutal and natural - earthquake, crushed cars, cracked concrete - and calling that event a kitten lick, tongue in cheek, kinda. But the label ended up getting us to use the tornado pic. They were a pain in the ass.

It's funny you mentioned Douglas Coupland because I was reading the liner notes the other night and noticed Martin Amis got a bit of thank-you. Did his writing have an influence on the band as well during the writing of the album?

Well we'd read *London Fields*, and I guess it was a time and place thing. It really blew our minds. The word "dart" actually is slang for "cigarette" - we nicked that from him. For me, he's definitely in my top five authors. Kel's too.

I'm interested to get some sort of handle on what being in the band was like back when *Kitten Licks* was written and recorded. Did you have any idea that you were working on something that'd last?

We totally didn't think in those terms back then at all. We knew the songs were good, they felt good, and we knew the band was on fire with Dean playing drums. That was about it – it was our little bubble, kinda all we cared about. We've always been such an insular unit. I didn't even meet Dave McCormack [of Custard fame] till about 2000! We didn't really become scenesters in any way, we were just very focused on writing recording and touring. Looking back it's all so innocent and naive, but very sweet, in a way. You gotta remember this is pre-internet, still back in the days when cutting and pasting your artwork together involved scissors and glue.

So it was a good time for the band?

It was lovely, yeah. Again, looking back it seems like a golden era, because of its innocence and naiveté. Kinda cute. It was also in an era when being in a loud guitar driven three piece was the shit! It was the very apex of band-ness. We had a really good time.

Screamfeeder - Kitten Licks Tour:

Brisbane - 9th of May at The Troubadour
Sydney - 30th of May at The Annandale Hotel
Adelaide - 5th of June at The Edinburgh Castle Hotel
Melbourne - 27th of June at The East Brunswick Club
Fremantle - 3rd of July at The Norfolk Basement
Perth - 4th of July at The Amplifier Bar

Kitten Licks out now via Low Transit Industries / Inertia. Listen to the whole thing now at www.myspace.com/screamfeederocks

Ian Rogers

Got something to add to this?

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