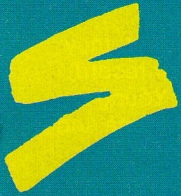


# SMELLS LIKE TROUPE SPIRIT

CLAYTOWN TROUPE sure have a lot to say. CHRIS WATTS barely gets a word in edgeways as singer CHRISTIAN RIOU argues that British bands are dying, America is like a toy-shop, and the band's new album, 'Out There' (possibly influenced by the Seattle Grunge sound) is the last hope for British bands who don't sound like the Quireboys...



SEATTLE IS a long way from Weston-super-Mare. But for Christian Riou and Claytown Troupe, the two minuscule small towns might as well be twinned.

Christian thinks that Seattle has blown a hole in Britain for Claytown Troupe and their new EMI album 'Out There'. He also thinks most A&R men are now dressing like the band have dressed for years.

"I don't think the British bands have the brains or the f\*\*king foresight to realise what's going on. There's a new wave of rock bands that don't sound like the Quireboys. Three years ago no one could understand all these bands and now everybody's listening to what we were listening to three years ago. It's sick!"

Claytown Troupe have never had an easy ride in Britain. In the 18 months since the release of their debut album for Island Records, the band have dabbled in Americana. They asked to be dropped from Island and signed instead to EMI Stateside. Then a boardroom buyout left Claytown Troupe with an album recorded and no record deal.

Leaving their rented apartment in New York, the five relocated back to Britain and into the arms of EMI UK. The last time I spoke to Christian was prior to the band's upheaval...

"You said we'd f\*\*ked it up!" the vocalist interrupts. "You said, 'Where are they now?'. Right? You bastard!"

In fact, Claytown Troupe didn't really f\*\*k it up. They were just sick of being compared to the Cult. At the time - having just sneaked into the national Top 40 with 'Prayer' - it seemed a strange move.

A YEAR-and-a-half later and Claytown Troupe are intact, revitalised and, if you believe Christian's

CLAYTOWN TROUPE: "We want to break down what people expect from a rock band"



Pic Steve Schotfield

mouth, infinitely trendier. In that time the band have seen a whole host of their peers disappear... even the Cult have become a cartoon.

"If 'Out There' doesn't do what it's supposed to do," he says, "then it's going to be very sad for British rock music. Thrash is completely dead. Metal has become this lumbering, penis-orientated monster. It doesn't have any credibility any more. The people who buy records deserve a band like us. They deserve a band that has come from the roots. We had no leg-ups, just a lot of hard work."

"I'll make a prophecy now, and that is if our door doesn't open then all these younger bands floating around now trying to do something different will all be dead in a year. You can smell them dying right now. There's a huge lack of musical freedom in this country."

"Most of the bands in this country look like they've stepped out of Woolworths!"

And American bands look like they've just stepped out of McDonalds?

"But we don't try to sound American. I think we sound very British."

"We went to America to try

and bring a piece of it back with us. British bands are taking their inspiration from second-hand moving pictures like MTV.

"Claytown Troupe are more intelligent. We admire and respect the place. We don't have this love affair with the West Coast. Los Angeles is full of faggots trying to look like bikers anyway!"

FRERRY FARRELL described going to Europe as like going to your gran's - you don't mind going there but not for long because it's a bit old and smelly! America is like going to the toy-shop. We see Claytown Troupe as the toy-shop in your gran's house!

"Our music is always changing. It's something that is commercial but you can't play it to your dad. Play your dad a Thunder record and he'll love it. Claytown Troupe become a part of someone's personality, their make-up. It's not a fashion thing. Nirvana T-shirts, for example, are a fashion thing. If you wear a Claytown Troupe T-shirt to your local gig you'll get people come up to you for a chat. It's very individualistic."

'Out There' is, in fact, not a million miles removed from the band's 'Through The Veil' debut. The band's recent live shows supporting Pearl Jam included just four songs from their original set ('Real Life', 'Alabama' and both singles - 'Hey Lord' and the smash-a-tastic 'Prayer'). Christian remembers 'Through The Veil' with affection.

"Some parts are a bit dodgy but it was us at the time. It was a band that desperately wanted to do something against all the f\*\*king odds!"

"At the time there were a lot of dumb things written about us. We got stuck for being inspired by something that the press told us to listen to. A year later it's supposed to be unfashionable. But our audience has never believed the press anyway."

CLAYTOWN TROUPE have always inspired a fair sized following of die-hard travellers. It was a part of the reason for their original deal with Island and inspired the band's own fanzine entitled *The Veil*. To commemorate their second album the glossy magazine has been re-titled *Out There*. Does Christian worry that after such a long absence the following will have found something else?

"We don't know how many friends we've still got," he says. "It's like having a shag when you haven't had one for two years! You're nervous it's going to go off too quickly. You're nervous it's not going to go off at all. But if it turns out to be a real good one then you'll remember it forever."

"We want to break down what people expect from a rock band. We want to put the Claytown Troupe jackboot in some of these bastards' faces! There are too many rock bands wearing slippers."

"Basically if this album doesn't happen then will the last one out of the country please turn off the lights!"