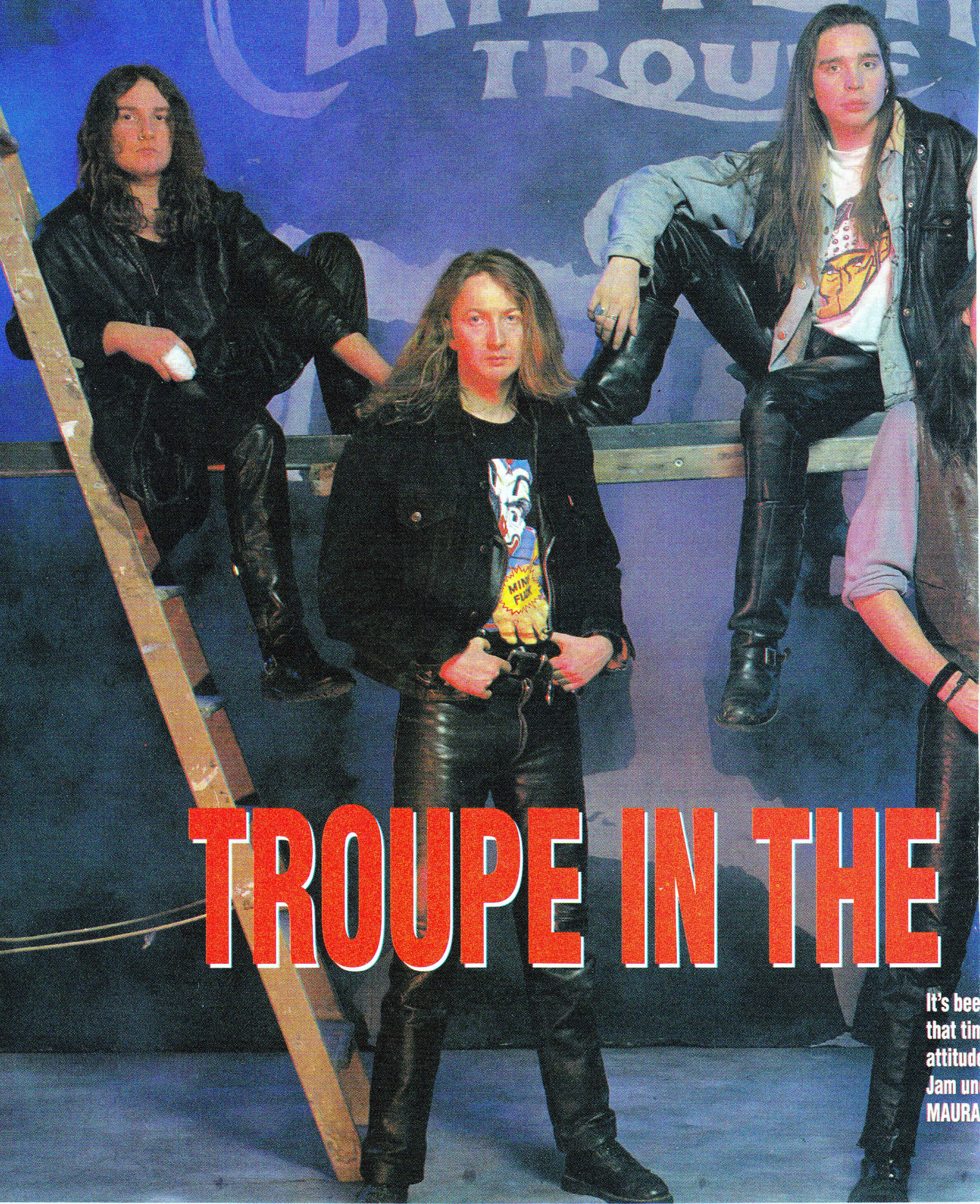


PLAYTOWN
TROUPE



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COLOUR!

Two years since the CLAYTOWN TROUPE went to ground. In they recorded a new album, 'Out There', copped a new and emerged all the stronger. With a support slot with Pearl their belts and a headline UK tour currently under way, SUTTON gets an update from singer CHRISTIAN RIOU

“YOU either love the Claytown Troupe or you hate us. There's no middle ground.”
Troupe vocalist Christian

Riou knits his formidable eyebrows and assumes a position of trance like intensity. Temporarily casting aside the old image of trouser-dropping lunacy, Riou adopts the self absorbed stance of a man with a mission. His passionate belief in the band that he created four years ago with four friends from Bristol seems somewhat out of place in the trendy London brasserie that serves as the venue for our lengthy discourse on all things Claytown.

Pausing briefly to cast a disdainful eye over a 'modern' painting on the wall ("my cat could have made a better job of that") the vocalist ignores the trendies as we attempt to shed some light on the dramatic re-emergence of the Claytown Troupe after a mysterious two year absence and a surprise change of label from Island to EMI

At the time of the band's disappearance in early 1990, they had already created a considerable stir with the excellent debut album 'Through The Veil' and frantic singles such as 'Prayer' and 'Real Life'. However, it was in the live arena that the Troupe truly excelled, with Christian's manic intensity and the band's refreshingly different approach combining to create a potent live experience. Following on in the great tradition of the likes of the Mission and New Model Army, the Troupe were supported by a large, highly mobile group of followers who endeavoured to attend every Claytown gig. The number of eyes they managed to poke out whilst dancing wildly to 'Alabama' has yet to be calculated! By the end of 1989 the band's profile could not have been higher, following a prestigious support slot on the Cult's UK tour, and, more importantly, drummer Andy Holt's legendary mooning antics at the end-of-tour party!

There was one final appearance at the Astoria in March 1990 when the strangely Queen-like new number 'How Can Anybody Do This' was aired and then... nothing! It seemed like the Claytown Troupe had fallen off the face of the earth, or possibly gone home to Bristol! In fact, as Christian explains, they had gone to New York, to, uh, chill out.

"When we left England we were doing really well" he recalls. "Everybody was saying that it was going to go through the roof and it was like 'Where do we go then?'. We disappeared to make the roof go a little higher."

The vocalist adds that at the time the Troupe was not quite the happy band one might have expected them to be considering the success of their debut.

"We didn't have massive success but we had consistent success", he argues, before admitting, "We did get a bit complacent. That's why we disappeared, so that we could loose all the negativity and learn a little bit more about each other, because our personalities had changed so much. Everybody was very confused as to what

everyone else was, what they had become, whereas before we knew each other inside out. If you're writing songs together you can't have that. I don't think it was a purposeful thing, I don't think anybody went out of their way to be like that, it was just the way it became because we were having consistent success. We didn't keep up with each other because we were more concerned with ourselves."

"After living together in New York for a year you gradually learn people's personalities and you can deal with each other a lot better. So when we came to finish the album off and record everybody was more relaxed. It's very difficult when you've got five grown men spending all their time with each other and there's no way out. You've got five people and the only way you can do your thing is with those five people. We just needed a complete change. It was as much for the fans, the people that bought the first record. They don't want to buy the next record and there's five minutes work gone into it and we're only doing it so we can buy bigger houses. They've gotta have something that we've bled for."

Christian is clearly bursting with pride at the result of all this blood n' guts. 'Out There' is the name of the opus, and it represents quite a departure for the band. Less of a celebration and more of an investigation into the darker side of life. According to Christian the weighty intensity of the finished article reflects the uncompromising nature of the year-long recording process.

"The first one was like a Caesarean!" he quips, analogies a-gogo! "It wasn't easy, but there wasn't much pain involved and there wasn't much blood. This one has been a full blown birth of quins, with complications. This one has been very painful and very aggressive and very exciting at the same time. We've come out of it on the other side with more than we had on the first one. Better songs, better attitude, we look better and we're healthier".

Finally, the vocalist has scant regard for the band's critics, pointing instead to the success of the Troupe's recent support slot with Pearl Jam as confirmation that their old fans have remained faithful.

"At the end of the day the media will not sell this record for us. It will play a part, but at the end of the day the audience are the judge and jury, as with the first album, and that sold fucking thousands. If the British rock audiences want a band that has got guts and determination then the band will do really well. My only worry is that the way the rock scene has become so commercial with everybody worrying about their chart positions and how many units they've shifted that people have come to accept that kind of insincerity in a band. I don't think they have, but I just hope that people want the Claytown Troupe for being honest, not for being an insincere bunch of faggots."

Is he right? It's up to you!