

RING, RING, RING.....

Antipodean teen-rockers **Operator Please** are one of 2007's hottest new bands.

They talk to **Ashleigh Scott** about religion, ponies and their fear of milk...

After an exuberant performance at the Astoria, London, I got the chance to go down under (well, backstage) and talk control, fate and school dinners with Antipodean teeny-rockers Amandah (19), Taylor (16) and Ashley (18) of Operator Please.

"I am actually enjoying the weather," declares vocalist Amandah. "It is really cold outside! But it's quite different to what we're used to in Australia, which we enjoy."

Before delving further into the bands burgeoning success, I take a swig of Amandah's beer, which amuses violinist Taylor greatly: "Ha ha, this dressing room does get hot though." I nod politely, agreeing that I too am 'working up a sweat just sitting here.'

Operator Please's brand of frenetic ADHD new-wave is colourful and a welcome excursion from the drabness of much of today's 'indie' bands - like a musical happy-bomb exploding on the scene.

"It's important to make people happy when writing music, you know, there is so much negativity in the world. We're all from very different backgrounds as well, which has an effect on our writing now and our purpose," reveals Amandah.

"Oh, really?" I inquire. "Well basically, I was raised in a Muslim family. A couple of our members are atheist too."

Taylor interjects to point out that she is interested in Buddhism, "I really admire the monks in Burma."

Ashley, bassist, strolls in having just straightened his hair, "Oh my, are you talking about religion now?" Amandah makes her opinions very clear at this point, believing that 'governments should separate religion and politics... placing anyone on a pedestal is a bad thing; the power goes to their head. The world is a huge place and if you don't look outside your own point of view you're going to get fucked up, basically.'

What does their music tell us about living in the year 2007 I wonder?

"People like computers" chuckles Amandah.

"Ha! We love MySpace - we're

always checking it!" giggles Taylor.

"But yeah, seriously, Amandah's lyrics are timeless and just subliminal."

Ashley steps in, 'they highlight social issues as well; I mean not political issues, but stuff regarding relationships and human behaviour.'

A modest Amandah then indicates that the aforementioned social issues should maybe not be taken seriously: "I'm scared people might turn into robots in the future, it's like, a fear I have. Ew, taken over by robots!"

"I have a fear of milk!" howls Taylor. I can't help but laugh and agree that soya is the way forward. "Once a strange man came up to me in a library and asked why I drink soya instead of milk. He said I couldn't make good decisions because of it and I just thought oh wow, this man is scaring me" she adds. A bashful Ashley apologizes for their 'ramble' interview style. "99% of what we're saying is ramble," she apologises.

If anything is clear, it is that these kids are extremely supportive of each other - vital for such a young, up-and-coming group. "Amandah

is like an older sister. I had an issue with a boy at home, but she got my back!" Taylor snuggles up to Amandah.

It becomes apparent Amandah is the bands central figure and a lot scarier than she might appear.

"If you fuck with a band member, you fuck with the whole band!" she threatens.

Operator Please formed during high school for a band competition, practising regularly at lunch times in a minuscule music room. "Not a fan of school dinners then?" I ask, attempting to crack a joke. Taylor laughs, "We brought our own lunch. No one eats in the canteen in Australia. It's always like a special treat if you get to eat at the canteen! I wasn't in the band then though, I joined later on."

Amandah fills us in, "Taylor's family farmed Shetland ponies. Do you know what they are?" I ponder for a while, giving my best 'intellectual' response: "Oh what, the small kind?"

"Yeah, yeah! Playing the violin was a hobby for me really. I had always planned to make horse riding and breeding my career," Taylor

stresses.

Funnily enough, it turns out that the horses played a huge role in securing Taylor's place as violinist in the band. "It was so weird actually. My friend bought a horse from Taylor's mum, and it was through her we found a new violinist. Our previous violinist left in '06 you see, and so I constantly

pestered my friends asking if they knew anyone that could take over. Finally, I was introduced to Taylor through my friend that bought the horses. We auditioned Taylor in my living room!" explains Amandah.

The girls clarify that they are huge believers in fate: "Oh yes, fate, definitely!"

But how about musicians that are not quite so lucky on the route to success? I query television such as *Pop Idol* that commercialise the forming of bands. "If you have a voice then people should be willing to listen. Not everybody was made to write music, so it would be wrong to criticise. Anyone that tries to shoot down another human being should be ashamed. But if you have a good voice and you want exposure, you know? It's a hard thing to do I think, maintain total composure and broadcast yourself like that."

Taylor thinks that 'everybody's in this industry for the same reason - to perform music and almost, bare your soul through that music. Some of the performers are so talented. Did you see that opera guy on *X-Factor*? He made me shiver!"

There is no doubt that Operator Please have been lucky gaining industry and indeed, audience interest so early on. Their debut single 'Just A Song About Ping Pong' was released on August 20, reaching number 10 in the UK Indie Chart and managing to bag 2 nominations for the ARIA awards.

"We never thought the band would get anywhere, but there is always a subconscious hope that it will. We had been a DIY band for 9 months, you know, designing our own CD covers and booking our own gigs. If I weren't in this band I'd be working part-time. I think travelling so much and being in a band has helped us to grow up. You meet so many different people in this industry and see so many places - we've definitely learnt to respect that. We've learnt how to be polite."

Taylor follows on from Amandah: "Gawd, I'd probably be in school failing chemistry. We've really learnt how to live."

operatorpleaseband.com
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