

# BIGGER THAN DAVID HASSELHOFF (PROBABLY NOT AS BIG AS MEAT LOAF)

**Bassist Frankie Poullain  
prepares for the Darkness'  
invasion of Europe**

by Chris Kaye

COCK ROCK GOOFBALLS THE DARKNESS WERE THE BAND TO CATCH AT THE U.K. FESTIVALS this past summer and were the odds-on favorite to win the Mercury prize. (As things usually go with the odds-on favorite, they lost.) Their first record, *Permission to Land*, has gone to Number One on the British charts and sounds like something that the Army's PSYOPS division might use to drive a barricaded dictator to surrender—but you know, in a good way. Comparisons to Spinal Tap are manifold: their most recent video features the band attacking a giant octopus by shooting lasers from their guitars, while another has them being hatched in caviar-like pods from the underbelly of a spaceship. I talked to bassist Frankie Poullain as they prepare to inseminate America with the rock of their fruited loins. »



**You guys are about the furthest thing from the whiny British bedwetting music that's so popular over there. What was the initial reaction to the band in London?**

[Laughs] I'll give you one word: It was incredulous. Incredulity. Is that a word? People were very incredulous. And they still are sometimes, actually—you see people looking at each other thinking, "F\*\*\* it, are we allowed to like this?" A lot of looks of surprise on people's faces. When you say that "allowed" thing, hence the title of the album, *Permission to Land*. And the name of the band too—escape from the Darkness into the light.

**Um, OK. You just finished your U.K. tour—where are you off to now?**

We're supporting Meat Loaf in Germany for the next two weeks. He says he's going to kick our ass. [Laughs] It's gonna be interesting, man. You know he's massive in Germany.

**Yeah, him and David Hasselhoff.**

Well, if you'll excuse the pun, Meat Loaf is massive everywhere.

**What's with the Germans, you think? They like such strange s\*\*\*.**

Well, they're into rock. They're into the epic. It's like classical music, yeah? All the German composers. The lineage, it all goes back to there, you know, Beethoven, Mozart. You know, they invented bombast, didn't they?

**In many different ways. So you would classify David Hasselhoff as epic?**

No, I think that's the German ladies—he's their ultimate guy, isn't he?

**What, one that looks like they do?**

No, he's got the nice car, big chest, big shoulders. The kind of guy that clenches his cheekbone muscles all the time. Could be the mullet, do you know the mullet? He's got the uber-mullet. But also, surprise surprise—the Italians are going nuts for us as well. And that makes sense too, yeah?

**I dunno... does it?**

The drama and the operatic qualities—they're going for it in a big way. Countries like France are going to be more difficult 'cause the French take themselves so seriously. They're just going to think "Oh, zees ees stupid." The French will be tough. The Japanese are really getting excited and that makes sense because they're into caricatures, and our band is kind of developing this thing of being caricatures because we've all been allowed to develop in our own way—no one's told us what to wear or anything. You know, all these bands that get styled to dress up like each other.

**Like the Strokes.**

It's blanket uniformity, you know. Actually, the Strokes are stylish in their own way, aren't they?

**I guess. If you like white belts.**

I don't have a problem with the way they dress, I just have a problem with the limp-wristed way in which they strum the guitars. They play the guitars like it's a banjo or something.

**What do you think of Beyoncé?**

She's great. She's good at what she does. Got a great look as well. Oh yeah, she's just the right mixture of firmness but also suppleness but also the kind of thing you want to pinch as well.

**I think she'd be tasty sprinkled over a salad or something, like bacon bits.**

Oh yeah. But for me it would be corn pieces, since I'm a vegetarian. Actually, I'm a piscatarian.

**So you only eat fish? Well that fits in... I wanted to ask you about this, a Reuters news story from today—and this is true—about fish in a lake in Texas that have been found to have Prozac in their flesh.**

Really?

**The chemicals came from a filtration plant or something, but that's beside the point.**

Wow.

**I want to know if the band supports giving drugs to marine life, and if so, where do we draw the line? Should we be giving cocaine to manatees?**

Well, I think we should give Viagra to endangered species. Like the pandas for example. And to the dodo—well, it's too late for the dodo, isn't it? Maybe we give them asparagus tips in garlic...

**Is that an aphrodisiac there?**

Well, it's different in every country, isn't it? What's the word again?

**Aphrodisiac?**

Yeah, what's an aphrodisiac in the States? Hot dogs? [Laughs]

**That's funny. Hot dogs, yeah. And oysters.**

Over here it's asparagus in garlic. I guess oysters for the upper class.

**What do you think of Bush? The president, not the band.**

Well, the president and band are quite similar really: Too dull to even be worthy of being talked about. I wouldn't waste a single syllable on either of the Bushes. Oh, that's nasty, isn't it? But I would like to say that Tony Blair's son, Euan Blair, is a huge fan of the Darkness. He came to a gig and told me that the previous night he was playing the album to his dad and his dad dug it big time.

**Is that a point of pride for you guys?**

Well, it's nice to cross barriers. He used to be in a rock band in the '70s.

**Did he really?**

Yeah, yeah man. Like Bill Clinton used to play the sax, Tony Blair used to play guitar.

**As badly as Bill Clinton played the sax?**

[Laughs] Probably. We should try and get them to have a band together, all these guys. Who would be the singer?

**Chirac?**

Chirac! [Laughs]

**He could probably do an Edith Piaf kind of thing. Speaking of Bush though, do you think the Darkness could be deployed in the war on terror?**

Big time, man. If Bush and Hussein were in the front row of a Darkness gig, there would be no way they could carry on the war. If "Love on the Rocks With No Ice" was number one in Iraq, none of those guys would be in caves loading up rifles.

**So the message really is "Love your brother?"**

Definitely, yeah. The message is "Love Is Only a Feeling," but it's also on the rocks with no ice.

**My editor will kill me if I don't ask this, so here it is: Why are you so awesome?**

Ah, that's beautiful. Actually, that reminds me, an interviewer asked me to ask Björk a question so I said, "Why don't you rock?"

**And what was her answer?**

Well, I haven't read the magazine yet, but I'm looking forward to seeing what she says. ■