

IDOL

WORSHIP

When AP asked him, **CARTEL** frontman **WILL PUGH** gladly booked a plane ticket to New York City to meet one of his biggest heroes, **SILVERCHAIR**'s **DANIEL JOHNS**, for this installment of AP's *Idol Worship*. However, the reason for the impromptu flight wasn't to reminisce about how he used to rock out to "Tomorrow" in his teenage bedroom. Nope, turns out it's the 'chair-man's orchestra-touting recent efforts that turned Pugh into a plane-hopping superfan.

PHOTOS: NICK BRANDRETH

WILL PUGH

Cartel



WILL PUGH: Truthfully, I missed a lot of your earlier stuff, all my friends caught it. But then this band from Atlanta, Copeland, played me [2002's] *Diorama* and I was like, "Who the fuck is this?" I remembered *Frogstomp*, but when I heard [*Diorama*] I was totally floored. I listened to "Across The Night," like, 20 times in a row. It's actually the album that I warm up to.

DANIEL JOHNS: Yeah? I've heard a couple people say they warm up to it, which is weird. [Laughs.] It's a weird vocal warm-up.

It is. Obviously, I went back and listened to the other stuff, but I'm mostly a fan of the newer stuff.

Sweet, man. That's actually more appreciated. You can usually tell when someone is at our show and they look young like you. You would had to have been seriously young to be into *Frogstomp*. I was 14 or 15 at that time. So there are a lot of people in America who came in at the tail end. But then I still meet these old rock guys, and they'll come up to me and go, "Frogstomp? Freak Show? What happened?" [Laughs.] You feel like you've got to apologize because you didn't keep them happy.

Do you have people who love your old stuff and don't like the new stuff? Or are there people who like the new stuff and don't like the old stuff? Is there a definite separation?



**DANIEL
JOHNS**
Silverchair

Yeah, there's not that many people who like everything, including myself. There's not that many people who like our whole career, which is understandable because it's completely different. I don't know. You'll probably get that as well after your second record. [Laughs.]

Oh, we're already getting it. We have this early EP we put out and everybody at shows is like, "Play this, play that," and we're like, "Man, we got a new bass player and he doesn't even know how to play those songs!"

[Laughs.] Just imagine how Aerosmith feel. Imagine being in a band for 20 years and having that much music and having people still yell,

"Play something from the first record!" [Laughs.] When I was 14 years old, all I wanted was to be Chris Cornell, grunge out, turn my guitar up and play riffs. But as you get older, you realize there's more to life than tuning down to D.

What started that progress for you? Was it just growing up?

It was just leaving school, I reckon. That was the biggest change. As soon as I left school, I stopped trying to write music I thought my friends would like and started writing music I liked. That was around *Neon Ballroom*. I don't know what happened with *Diorama*. That just changed things dramatically and I can't figure out why.

There's a definite difference between Neon Ballroom and Diorama. It's almost like a different band.

It sounds like it to me, as well. It's bizarre. That shift really wasn't supposed to be that dramatic, and I didn't realize that it was that dramatic until after the fact.

Do you think that came from [famed Beach Boys' string arranger] Van Dyke Parks being involved? Because, for me, that was crazy. I'm a big fan of SMILE and all that. Are you a fan of SMILE?

Yeah, I'm a huge fan of that stuff. But to be honest, when I was writing *Diorama*, I hadn't really heard the Beach Boys. It was only when I was demoing the songs with [longtime Silverchair collaborator] Paul Mack that he said it reminded him of Brian Wilson. Paul said I should hear *Pet Sounds*. I heard it and, obviously, my mind was blown. Then someone brought up Van Dyke Parks and I heard his work on *SMILE* and just went, "For sure, this guy is genius."

Did you have a big hand in the stuff he did for Diorama? Or did you hand him what you had and he just did his thing?

No, we talked about it quite a bit. We talked about what I was going for, and I knew what he would bring to it. We actually talked more about the stuff he did on *Young Modern*. We talked for a year prior to even recording about what we wanted to do and about how we were going to get five people to Prague...

Yeah, I saw that in the liner notes. I was like, "Fucking Prague? Those bastards!"

Yeah, it was pretty self-indulgent. [Laughs.] We funded this record ourselves, and I remember going through the budget and I was like, "So, how much money do we need?" Because we make Australian dollars, which is nothing compared to American dollars. So we budgeted out how much we needed and then I was like, "Oh, yeah, by the way, I want to record the strings in Prague." [Laughs.] My manager was just like, "You're a fucking idiot!"

I actually got my hands on Young Modern a little early. But it [never] left my CD player, I promise.

Oh, I don't give a shit. [Laughs.]

Well, some people would be like, "What the fuck?" I have the demos, too, if that doesn't piss you off.

Wow, I didn't know anyone had those! [Laughs.] I would have spent more time on those bad boys had I known people were going to hear them.

No, I make a lot of demos myself. So it was cool to hear someone else's demos and hear the record not too long after.



The reason those demos were recorded were to get dropped from [Silverchair's former label] Atlantic. We had just done *Diorama* and they were good and everything, but I don't think they really liked where the band was going. So [the label execs] were like, "What are you doing on the next record?" and I said, "Ughhh, you're not going to like it." Then I went into the studio and we recorded those in a week-and-a-half and most of the time I was on ecstasy. I didn't have any lyrics or anything. I just made them up. Yeah. So that's that story. [Laughs.]

My iPod is currently in fritz mode, but I was trying to listen to some of those today on the plane to try and get questions together. But I still couldn't believe that I was actually going to fly up here and do this.

I actually had about 52 songs written for this record. [But it wasn't until after] we played a tsunami benefit show in Australia [that we were ready to record them]. That was the first show that Silverchair played in, like, three years. We just loved it so much, and I think it was the next day that I called Ben [Gillies, drummer] and Chris [Joannou, bassist] and said, "Let's do another record!"

They might as well write in the interview, "So the tsunami was the reason Silverchair got back together..."

Yeah, in a lot of ways it was. If it wasn't for that show, I don't know if it would have happened. We were really enjoying *not* playing together. I think we took playing in the same band for granted, and it was only then that we had the opportunity to [play again]. So, we got together to play that show, and everyone was feeling the love. Then after us [were] Midnight Oil. Do you know Midnight Oil?

No, I don't.

They're this phenomenal Australian band. They've been together for over 20 years and they went on after us. We were just watching them and... You know when you see a band like U2 or Midnight Oil and they just have this collection of songs? That's the kind of band that I want to be in. I'm sure you [feel similarly], as well. That's the goal. You just want to have this catalog of stuff where every show you play you have trump cards you can lay down.

Do you have any songs that you just hate playing? Not necessarily because you don't like the song, but because what it represents about the band?

Oh, yeah. I remember that by the end of our second album I was like, "The next time I play 'Tomorrow,' I am literally shooting myself in the face." [Laughs.] I hated it that much. But that's the thing, you got to keep playing on through and, eventually, if you keep playing good music, people will start paying attention. Then if you play for long enough, a whole new generation will appear—just like you. **ait**

