

**Trannies With Attitude**  
By M

formed some two years ago out of a dark and bleak landscape of post goth leeds where the last big thing to happen was the Age Of Chance, and some sad boys/men in leathers wearing too much eye liner. Manchester had had it's baggy scene, Cheshire had the Charlatans, Sheffield had Warp, and everywhere else had necked down a few e's and gone out in search of a twelve hours of fun.

Paul Fryer, and Nick Raphael and a group of like minded friends decided it was time to put Leeds and glam back on the map, and so Vague and TWA were born, kickin' screaming and shaking their handbag. tired of gurnin' grinning lunks, in sweat ridden toilets TWA wanted to recreate the glam of pop and mix it with the high of house. Born on a bed of lurex and hairspray TWA picked their influences from far and wide.

The first incarnation of Vague was the Kit Kat club, where cigarette girls were back in fashion and the music was strictly handbag. But the place was small and didn't quite fit their ideal, after several different venue changes and a name change they ended up with a perfect formula. The venue was the Leeds Warehouse and the night was called Vague. The



Warehouse was famous throughout the North in the early 80's for it's links with bands like the Sisters of Mercy, and it's championing of the new mixing n'scratching DJ's in the early 80's. It was also the home to the last glamour queen to come out of the Warehouse closet (well cloakroom to be exact) Marc Almond.

With Vague there's no door policy, Vague will take anybody, the only entry certificate is an open mind and happy feet. So a typical night at Vague has a diverse mixture of hip clubbers, old trannies, students and topshop townies all mixed together.

The club also works on a air of unpredictability, as anyone who witnessed TWA's thrusts into London will know. Their sets can be polished or a complete shambles, but you can guarantee whatever it is the music is going to be good. They can also have a somewhat bizzare approach to mixing, otherwise known as slamming the fader up and dropping the needle on the record, slamming rather than mixing.

But above all TWA have style. The first time I saw them play was in the Cafe de Paris in London. Boy George was slagging the boys off because they weren't really Trannies, and everything was getting a little out of hand. We were standing around chatting, and someone said come on it's time to go, to the SW1 club. So we all troop out of the club, and into a bloody STRETCH LIMO !!! No back of a Ford Transit for these boys, a bloody cream stretch limo with MTV, videos of Madonna, CD players, and a cocktail cabinet full of booze, this is just sooo TWA. A band of great exits, but that's only half the story. When they DJ'ed at Manchester's Hacienda they got the security staff to open the doors by the stage so that they could DRIVE into the club in the limo. Pure style

In the last year since I last saw them play London, things have gone from strength to strength. TWA have produced a whole mega successful LP

Let's go Tesko, and they've just signed a deal with Phonogram, that should keep them in frocks for a long long time. Vague now has queues up the road and everyone gay straight, black white, young or old mixes together in a really friendly manner. A large skinhead with a thick Leeds accent wanted to know if "I was havin a good time". If he'd been in a bar round the corner he would have probably belted me for "avin a phooney accent". Vague and TWA we love them to death

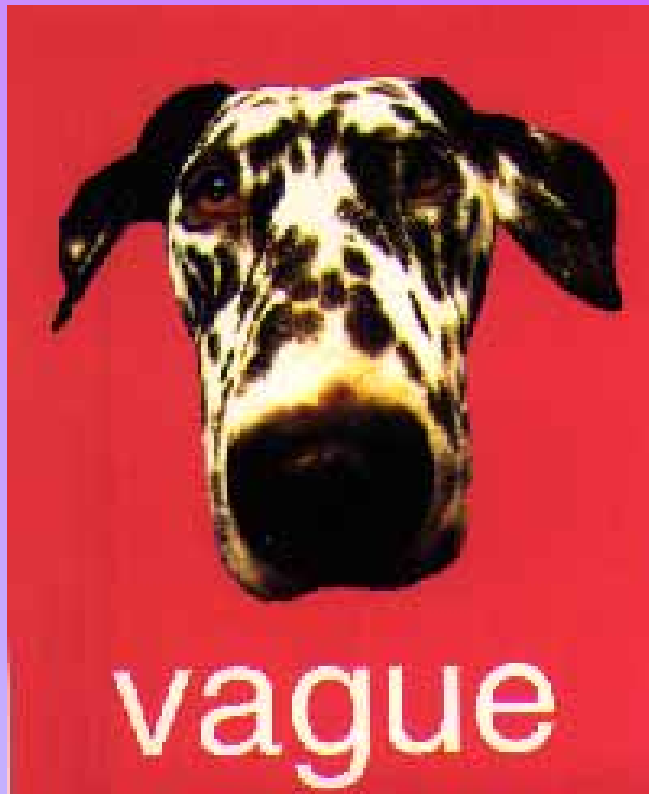
TWA in their own words

Describe yourselves, and who you are.

We are TWA. TWA stands for "Trannies With Attitude" but it could just as easily stand for "The World is Androgynous". We are Djs, recording artists, producers, remixers, all that stuff. There are 3 of us; Nick Raphael is currently working at London Records, Paul Fryer is currently designing and running the club Vague, and Big Paul is the producer and is busy with his purpose.

How did TWA start out and why did you decide to start it?

TWA started out as an endearment and a joke. Nick and I where pissed and we got talking about purging the hooligan element out of the club



(at the time our first venture , the Kit Kat club.) So we donned wigs etc and DJ'd as Trannies With Attitude, Danny Rampant and Jeremy Feely. The press picked up and the rest is history.

What sort of music does TWA like to promote?

The more extreme and unlistenable the better. Wallpaper schmalz. Oh, I don't know ... What have you got ? Repetitive beats. Root. Underground. Overground wombling free.

Is such a thing as a Tesko movement ? are you going to carry on in the same direction ?

I think so. We dragged handbag out of the closet and changed it from a derogatory label to something to be proud of . Tesko is a true genre. Techno Disco, Moroder. Van Helden. Hardfloor, I still use Tesko as a mental point of reference even if we don't still outwardly champion it.

Do you see Jungle being the death of dance and all the smaller subcultures ?

No. It's just another aspect of human creativity and ingenuity. You can't uninvent anything. The music virus is just doing what it does best; mutating and surviving the ravages of the corporate bodies it inhabits and fees on Jungle Bip Up Massive, guy.

Will you be putting out more compilations like Lets go Tesko and do you have plans to set up your own label, and what's your current situation ?

W're involved in Club. Together with EMI, but I don't think we'll be doing any more compilations deliberately. We're too interested in the creative end, really. We already have our own label (Charlie Girl Records Ltd) and we've just signed a recording contract with Phone-A-Gram.

Do you have any big plans for TWA in the future? What can we look forward to?

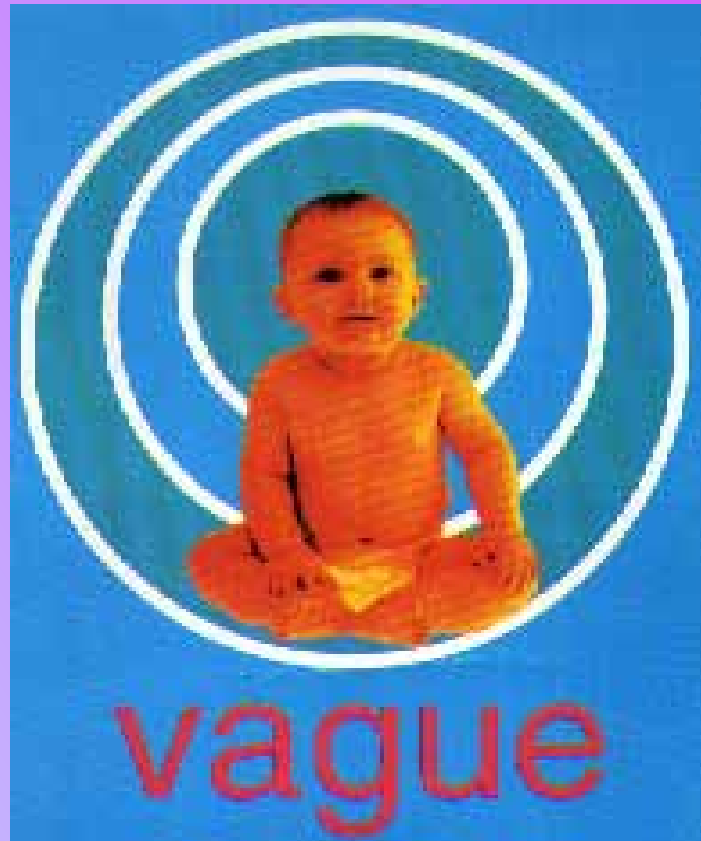
Yes, Empires to be built etc. We're building a studio with the capital from our recording advance. We're working with exciting people on new projects and our first single should be out soon. LLLookout!

You are also part of Vague, what are your plans for that? Will there be a Vague tour? or something bigger.

Vague will just get better. More solid, bigger reputation. We're not touring it though. We couldn't maintain the level of service that we achieve in Leeds. Club tours are mainly a con, a way of scratching each other's arses and generating advertising into the bargain. The punters usually lose out (as usual).

What sort of music do you listen to? Does any of this inspire you? Are there any artists / tracks that you can look back upon and think 'That's really responsible for the way our music sounds today'?

I like Can, Jimmy Cliff, The Undertones, The Residents, Bob Marley, The Beatles, Shirley Bassey, but the list is endless. All good music inspires us. Georgio Moroder, Mark Moore and Patrick Cowley. Cerrone and George Martin have



all influenced us, but so have hundreds of others.

Can you see your musical orientation altering at all in the future, will we see TWA covering a Public Enemy song like Tricky?

Yeah. Why not. Fuck Da Police, maybe. Or Motherfucka Uzi Nigga Cocksucka Bitch Who' Asshole.

Do you intend to stay in Leeds?

I do. Nick and Big Paul can do as they

please

What's your relationship with the other Leeds one-nighters? Is there going to be a Leeds band scene emerging like the Portishead, Massive, Tricky, Bristol band scene?

I didn't know there was a one nighter in Leeds called Portishead. Yap, our relationship with them is cool.... Fuck who knows. We've got our own thing goin on, but you folks are welcome to join us. I don't know if we're as cool and funky as Tortoisehead or Tricky, tho.

(The Smash Hits question) Where do you get the frocks and wigs from?

Wigs from Richard's in Leeds Market. Frocks from all over. We get a lot from Top Shop. We're currently having two fly outfits made ..... we're dressing up as stereo Jimmy Savilles for Golden in Stoke.

Would you like to add anything?

At least another fifty years of youth and maybe 1.3 million pounds to my current account.



## SNOWBOARDING

“It might look cool, but it’s impossible to do.” That’s how I felt about snowboarding — so I just never bothered. Still, I admired — and hated — “riders” for the hands-free manoeuvres and fashionably ragged kit that gave them that mysterious rogue image. You know, the strong and silent type. But everyone was talking about it — and if I believed the stats — they were trying it too. So why then, though millions have mastered skiing, have only a few thousand people in the world been able to figure out how to ski on a board? Experts, freaks, wannabees were confused too. What they told me shook me beyond belief: “It’s easy,” they confided. “Anyone can do it.”

**“Once you try it you’re hooked”**

The attraction of snowboarding is the image, the action, and the feeling that riders are getting away with something. Like going to work with a pink mohawk: most people don’t wear their hair that way, but no one can stop you from doing it.

To the board-challenged majority, snowboarding — like freestyle skiing — looks dangerous, difficult and very, very scary. But it’s more like jumping on a trampo-

line: everyone can do it, with varying degrees of complexity and success. And like the trampoline, everyone who does it gets hooked.

### How it's done

According to the experts, although being a decent skateboarder helps, it has nothing to do with snowboarding except the tricks. The first thing you learn is to turn. You learn to make slide turns by kicking your back foot around and guiding the board downhill with your front foot. The weight of your body takes you down, you bend your knees for control and balance with your arms. Easy peasy. As you practice and build speed, your slide turns become more carved out of necessity and you’re “shredding”. The rest is nerve. Chris Millard, a snowboarder who manages specialist Snow & Rock shops in the UK, explained that “riding is easier than skiing because once you learn the manoeuvres, there’s nothing else to learn. The rest is speed and confidence.” And practice boys.

### Short learning curve

“If you’d never been on snow,” he said, “then went skiing for a week, at the end of the week you’d still be doing beginner runs, maybe some intermediates. If you went snowboarding instead, you’d



be attempting black runs at the end of the week.” Yeah right. But everyone I spoke to claimed that a person right off the street, with no experience whatsoever would be able to snowboard to some degree after a single 2-hour lesson. Paul, the manager of Slick Willy’s, a snowboard speciality shop in London, conceded that it can be a bit difficult at first, but that “after two or three days you get the hang of it and never stop.” At Aviemore Snowboarding Academy, Liam said learning starts on a gentle slope, with an emphasis on walking with your board, and managing the tow and T-bar — apparently the most difficult and discouraging part of taking up the sport. A friend pathetically corroborated this by returning, black and blue, from a week of snowboard lessons — all from T-Bar spills, he claimed.

So if anyone can do it, who are those out of control jerks sputtering like insects who’ve flown into a wind-screen? Those are the non-lesson-taking few who give riders a bad name among skiers and other mountain folk. More about them later.



**What happens when you wipe out !!**

Even though riders look a bit like someone standing on their ironing board trying to fly, it is actually less precarious, and less prone to injury, than skiing because the two feet are bound together. In fact, the most dangerous part of snowboarding seems to be its potential for pissing skiers off. What happens when you fall down or “stack” on a snowboard is that, unlike skiing, your feet stay attached to the board. With your feet locked on one platform you have more strength and control and it is much more difficult to get hurt. You’re not going to damage yourself and break a leg or pull a muscle that way. Or so “they” say. It helps that you only have two edges to worry about. Skiers have four. Apparently older skiers whose knees are gone take up snowboarding for this reason, with fantastic results. These statements all seem to be preceded by the qualifier, “unless you fall down very hard.....”

**The sport**

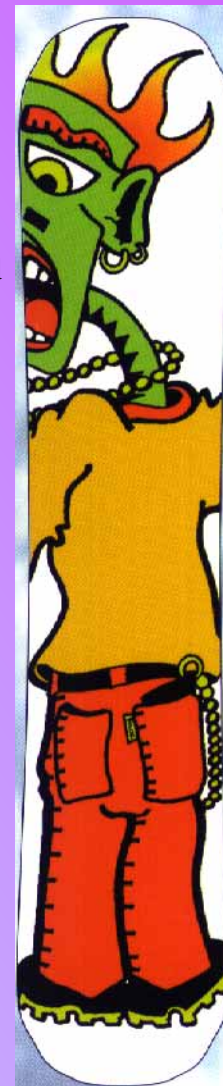
When the first snowboarders cropped up in the 1980s, it was mainly state-side surfers and skateboarders looking for the another challenge. Rider lore has it that Jake Burton Carpenter and Tom Sims pioneered the sport in the 70s, as kids who grew up riding wide, curly-ended boards they



called “potato chips” or “Snurfers”. As grown-ups, they were instrumental in the design of today’s hi-tech boards and have never looked back. Burton is now the sport’s biggest manufacturer and wholesaler of equipment and fashion.

Snowboarding is now the fastest growing winter activity in the world — to quote an overused sport marketing claim — and people from all walks of life are trying it. In the last three years, retail sales of snowboarding gear have increased 800%. If the sport keeps growing at this rate, more people will be snowboarding than skiing by the year 2008. Then we’ll have to find a new sport.

In the next Winter Olympics, snowboarding will make it’s debut as a competition sport, then be reviewed by The Olympic Committee for official status. Currently there is a Snowboarding World Cup, with events in slalom, giant slalom, parallel slalom and half pipe — the tube-like trick track where riders perform flips and other manoeu-



vres. Don’t try this at home.

**The culture**

I don’t think there is anything I can add to the following statement: “Riders pretty much stick with their own kind, clothes-wise, if I see a rider with a woolly beanie like mine, I’ll stick with him.” Oh.

Thankfully there is no animosity between clothing factions.

**Rider style**

Laid-back rider style can be spotted from a mile away, and it’s made snowboard gear big business. Snowboard style plays on street fashion more than on alpine influences. There are two ways to go: anti-fashion fashion, the cheapest; Levis, layered jumpers, maybe a windshirt, neck scarf and glasses, and you’ll need gloves; or official gear — which looks great and keeps you dry, but can cost you. Clothes are loose, in low-key colours and built to take a beating, but they can run you £200 for a pair of trousers.

The trendiest gear this year was from Fire & Ice and Killer Loop. Top of the line rider kit is available from Burton under the Biolite name, Quicksilver, Bonfire, Patagonia with their fuzzy fleece, Northface, Wave Rave and scores of others — including the likes of Versace. You can tell where “crossovers” — riders from other sports — originate from



by their labels: skaters wear Bauer, surfers wear



Quicksilver, skateboarders wear Sessions, hikers and X-country skiers wear Patagonia and Northface, etc.

Chris at S&R says that for next season snowboard fashions are brighter and more form-fitting. Just when you were getting it right. For women, the tight cropped rocker t-shirts and little sky blue jackets popular on the street have made their way into the winter '95 gear. Something cute to wear, something cute to look at. Which brings us to:

### The Babe factor

Whether you're male or female, snowboarding has an amazing power to pull. Snowboarding is still predominantly a guy's sport, so as a chick magnet, it's as good as it gets. It certainly beats inviting her over to watch "This is Spinal Tap" for the ninth time. Your big advantage here is that mysterious, rogue image. Remember, no one knows that snowboarding is easy except snowboarders. And they are not talking. If you're lucky, women will be impressed with you and unable to tell a brilliant manoeuvre

from a painful wipe out — but don't count on it. For women there are mega babe opportunities. You have two choices: get on your board and start your own fan-club, or go into the bunny relegation league which is a wee bit tired and a wee bit crowded these days. Women riders have advantages, being lighter and more flexible than most men, and you'll have plenty of female company. So get to it girls!

### What you'll need to get started

Fashion talk aside, you can still start with the bare minimum and build from there: gloves, waterproof clothes, a couple of woolly jumpers, a hat and goggles or glasses, depending on the weather. The full kit, including equipment, can be hired for about £25 from most UK resorts, or from hire shops nearby. If it's summer, or you can't get to snow, the UK's dry slopes are a good place to try out your manoeuvres. Snow & Rock has hire shops at the dry slopes at Beckton, Himmel and soon at Sheffield. So you're sorted.

### GEAR: What it is, What it costs

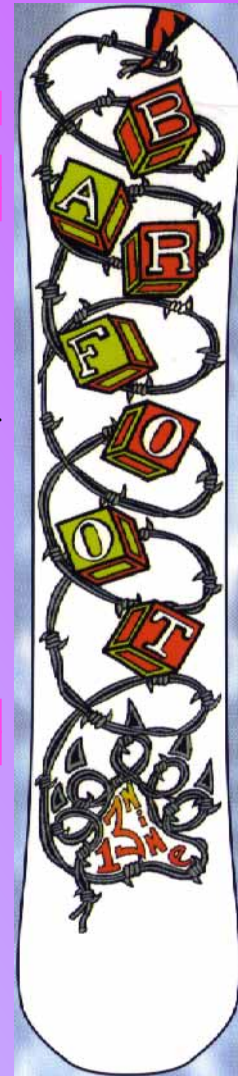
Slick Willy's says that riders who've only been a couple of times, but want to get serious, as well as experienced riders, buy snowboarding equipment. Here's what you need to know if you

really want to go for it.

Snowboarding can be as expensive as skiing with boards/bindings ranging from £300-£650 and boots from £75-£250.

**THE BOARDS:** Depending on foot size, level and speciality, boards come in many widths and sizes — even for the same model. Snow & Rock estimates there are nearly 80 board makers, with so many hundreds of models and styles that you could almost have gear all your own. The smallest board is 110CM (for kids) and goes up from there. The proper size board for you should hit somewhere between your chin and forehead. The board can be shorter if you're a beginner, or if you're more experienced and want to do jumps or ski powder. Select a bit longer board for higher speed and a smooth ride. Once you've been up a couple of times, you'll know what you want in a ride. Boards for beginners will generally be wider. Narrower boards are good for carving turns at high speed. The names are cool too: Liquid, Wave Rave, Never Summer, Original Sin. Ride that.

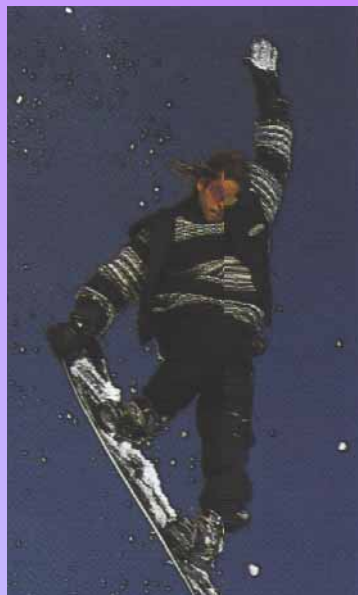
**THE BOOTS:** There are two types: hard and soft. Hard boots are more European-style and have been popular there for years.



These support your ankles, and accordingly can cause more pressure on your knees. These are popular with riders crossing over from skiing, because skiers like stiff boots. Soft boots are well, softer — more like a hiking boot — and therefore more comfortable. They are great for beginners and great for freestyle riding because they are more flexible. They are also thought to be safer to start on. These are the boots they wear in America. At the low-end, soft boots are cheaper because they're less complex, but mid-range soft boots will run you around £150, about the same price as comparable hard boots.

**THE BINDINGS:** Sold with boards as a package. There are two types which correspond to the boot types: soft boot system: strap over toe and strap on back of foot with support on back of leg. Plate bindings for use with hard boots are easy for carving turns or for slalom rides. They give more of an angle on your feet.

**FINDING BARGAINS:** £300 best seller: Oxbow. These cheap boards were sold out at S&R before Christmas — mostly to young kids



— but they're cheap and cheerful, good quality and not just for kids. A lot of companies sell boards made by other manufacturers, but smart riders know that one of the best bargains is a board sold under the name of Liquid, but manufactured by Ride — an excellent name. These are the identical boards that Ride sells, at 1/2 the price. The best overall equipment deals tend to be at the end of the season, but the pickings are slim. You can try buying equipment from ski resorts at the end of the season too. Aviemore, for example, sells off its rental equipment and replaces it each year.

**The best ride in the World**

The type of ride and social life you look for will determine what you like, but the three resorts named consistently among our UK-based sample group seem to be: Chamonix in France, noted for the most extreme jumps and steep terrain; Tignes and the south of France in general, and the almighty Squaw Valley in California. Chris from S&R rated Au Mason in the south of France as having the best chalet snowboard scene and runs combined.

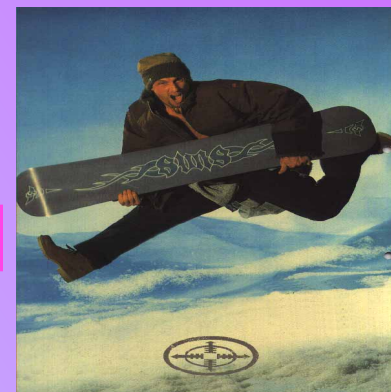
**In the UK**

Okay, let's get real. The chance of you taking glam snowboarding holidays in the States is pretty unlikely for awhile. A trip to one of the

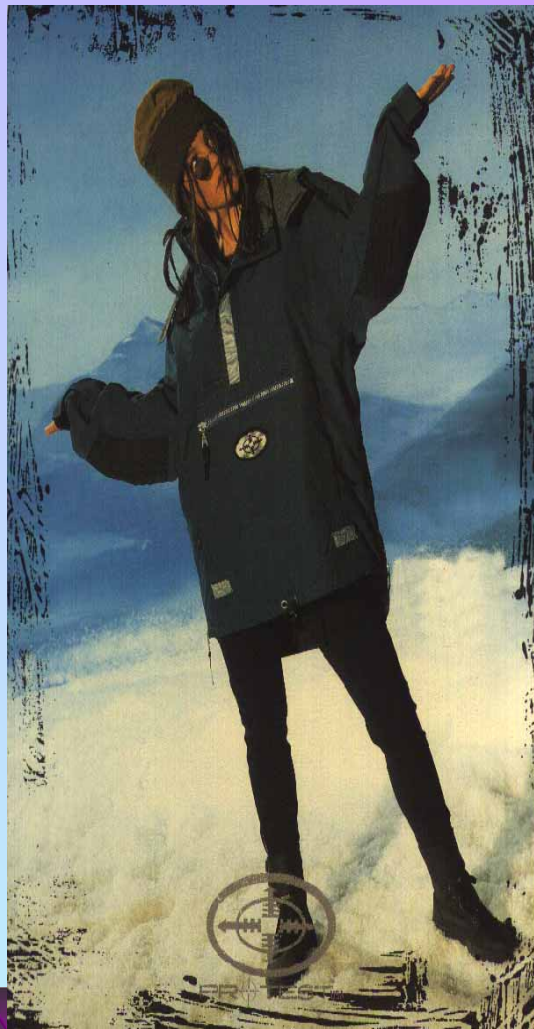
French resorts is nearby, but will still set you back £500 or more. In the UK, Scotland's ski resorts are the centre of action. Although the Cairngorms are not brilliant snowboarding, or skiing for that matter, they're well-kept, well-priced, never too crowded and a great place to learn. Aviemore has top notch, new equipment for hire, a full service snowboarding academy, and a snowboarding park. There are also a decent number of pubs and hangouts nearby to meet other riders. Snowboarding personnel at Aviemore say that although the academy has run for nearly 5 seasons, this was the season when it really took off. The 200 new boards available for hire are sold out every weekend day. Riders use the same slopes as skiers and "are getting used to one another," an official explained gingerly.

On the west coast, Glencoe and Glenchee have quieter party scenes, but with steeper slopes rate higher among UK riders for jumps and terrain. Both of these have snowboarding runs for more experienced riders, and access to all ski slopes, but have little to offer in the way of equipment hires.

The dry slopes cropping up all over the UK, are made of a



synthetic substance that feels like thousands of bristle brushes when you fall down. A bit unpleasant, but neither wet nor cold. You can hire anything you need at the Snow & Rock onsite. Dry slopes are pretty barebones in terms of service, but the



advantages are that they're cheaper, open all year and good for practising freestyle tricks. The disadvantages are that the "terrain" is not varied or challenging and it hurts to fall down on a bed of white brushes.

**Spring boarding**

The popularity of snowboarding and the advent of dry slopes has created a warm weather snowboarding season worldwide. If you want to ride through the summer, the British Snowboarding Association runs dry slope events and competitions all year around to boost the sport. Other opportunities are glacier riding in France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, summer snowboard camps in Europe, or snowboarding in the mountains of the southern hemisphere — where it will soon be winter.

**Still in a four-letter word**

Those non-lesson-taking morons mentioned earlier are the lot to blame for snowboarding's bad image. They knock over your date on the piste, ski over the tips of your mum's skis, and put your dad in a grumpy mood before lunch. These are the reckless rogues who wreak havoc on the mountain. These guys, "are kind of messing it up for the rest of the riders," Liam confided. "Skiers come around all the time and tell me how disgusting snowboarders are, how they make them sick. They swear at them, but don't realise

For more information:  
 British Snowboarding Association  
 Read: Snowboarder, SUK (Snowboard UK)  
 Aviemore, Scotland: 01479 81 06 24/  
 Snowboarding Academy: 01479 810 336  
 Glencoe, Scotland: 01855 851 226  
 Snowboard equipment shops:  
 Low Pressure — snowboarding: 0171-243-2628/London  
 Slick Willy's — snowboarding, skateboarding: 0171-937-3824/London  
 Snow & Rock — snowboarding, skateboarding, rollerblading, climbing, hiking, : 071-937-0872/ Kensington, Birmingham, Beckton, Himmel, Sheffield, Windsor.

I'm a snowboarder too, "an S&R employee whispered. A ski instructor from Glencoe put it into frighteningly clear perspective, "there's a hooligan element — usually uncouth, rude, males — who think they own the mountain just because they have a wide board." And you thought it was a glam sport.





Gretchen Hofner

By Hasi

Gretchen Hofner, a happy blend of the Velvet Underground meets Come Dancing are back with a vengeance and they're looking for planet domination.

The band vision of our world is pretty simple - 'Earth is a deranged zoo where all the cage doors have been left open,' said Paul Hofner, lead singer, spokesperson and all out svengali.

The band's name might sound like its come from some Berlinesque B movie, but I'm afraid its nothing so strange.

Its named after Paul and a tattooed, ex-stripper called Gretchen who used to sing in his band when he hung out in New Orleans, that's until she ran off with randy Andy the sax player.

At one point they claim they were 'dismally unfashionable and unloved'. Now they've become the darlings of the media, likened to everyone from Nick Cave to Marc Almond. Hofner, however, can't see the latter, despite his funky tattoo of pin-up Betty Page.

The band are totally the opposite to big stadium guys who sing about brawling and their women. No these guys sing about



Australian women obsessed with having sex with ugly men, bad psychoanalysis trips, bad weather, trannies who live in north london and shoe fetishists, not forgetting lots of play on miracles and evangelist tv.

There single 'Crow in Heels' is just about to be released. It will be closely followed by their album Leopardskin Pink, which is dedicated to the B movie appreciation of artificial fibres plus a good dollop of sex.

An early morning telephone conversation with Hofner who apparently was sat astride a goth chair in his birthday suit. Shame - we don't have a video phone.

GH: Lets get down to the gritty stuff then



R: So what's your fave colour  
GH: It has to be leopardskin pink that appears in mark III ford cortinas and bathroom suites in homes in the home counties

R: Fave food

GH: Spinach that has to be picked by carmelite nuns. It just doesn't taste the same if they're not virgins

R: Fave transport

GH: Citroens only circa 56 to 81. Nothing else should be allowed on the road

R: Fave woman

GH: Has to be Louise Brooks. pure sex

R: What do you carry all the time

GH: An inhaler, actofed mixed with cider which sends ya off your head, an irish 50 p, 10 Marlboro light, a comb that looks like a flick knife, a box of fishermans friends in the original tin, guitar plectrums, condoms and a piece of paper saying how heavy Elvis is on various planets. eg. earth 255 lb, jupiter 648 lb mercury 97 lb

R: Pastimes

GH: ain't got any

R: How would you like to be remembered

GH: I'd just like to be remembered

R: That's it

GH: Yep i'm bored with talking now bye

See and hear for yourself when Gretchen Hofner release their new LP Leopardskin Pink or alternatively just click her.