

# news

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## PLACEBO IS THE REAL THING

Glam-sex-punk with a melodic twist is the latest Britpop antidote



Brian Molko: Pretty boy and moody cunt.



Inhale. "My pessimism stems from my own disappointments with myself and others, my over-developed sense of self-awareness, that I don't think about people enough before I act, that I can be selfish, that my actions sometimes hurt people, that I'm too confused, that my actions sometimes hurt people, that I don't know what I want all the time, that I'm a moody cunt -- the basic self-analytical shit," says Brian Molko, lead singer and prophet of misfortune for the London-based (but definitively not British) Placebo. Exhale.

Placebo's self-titled debut stirs up images of fear, vulnerability and gender-bending sexuality so honestly you can't help but carry a torch for Molko's optimistic delusions of grandeur. But an obsession with the music and a compulsive need to dissect himself on stage is the only way Molko sets himself free from his own self-doubt. "I'm just cursed," he says, "with the need to lay my heart bare to thousands of strangers." The openly confused and androgynous lead singer also wears his heart on his sleeve while engaging in the gender bender game. He's so damn pretty, he gives Bush's Gavin Rossdale a run for his money. "I was being mistaken for a girl three or four times a week," says Molko. "I decided if people were that easily confused, I was going to turn the confusion button up and actually make it into something that meant something. If it can challenge, in any way, people's preconceptions of what a man is supposed to look and behave like, than that's positive."

"If there is anybody who has ever been homophobic who comes to one of our shows, thinks I'm cute and wants to fuck me, then realizes that I'm a guy -- they have to ask themselves some questions about why they found me attractive in the first place." When it comes to desire and emotions, Placebo is pushing the shades-of-grey theory: things are most certainly not

black and white in the libido arena. But Molko feels he missed out when the higher power was passing out genders: "I could have been the ultimate rock chick."

Funny thing is, Molko is the ultimate rock chick anyway, and Placebo might just turn out to be the real thing. After Britpop's abysmal showing in the U.S., the band stands destined to be the saving grace for British music stateside, even though none of its members hail from the U.K. Molko is an American brought up in the dingy confines of Luxembourg (Placebo has a new song called "Burger Queen," which tells the tale of a gay heroin addict from the dismal country -- "Possibly the worst thing to be in the world," says Molko.) Bassist Stefan Olsdal and drummer Robert Schultzberg are Swedish. Unrelenting in his desire to shake the British stigma, Molko refers to the outfit as a "Planet Earth" band. The three set up shop in London simply because of its flourishing music scene.

While rock stardom may be just around the corner for Placebo, Molko remains uneasy about donning the mantle. "I have a problem with the idea of being a rock star because I'm just as fucked-up as anybody else," says Molko. "Elvis was a fat bastard who died trying to take a shit. He made some great music but he was a fuck-up. I don't believe in the idolization of fuck-ups. We're all fuck-ups which is why I have a problem with this rock star thing."

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