

RHYTHM

INTRODUCING... KING PRAWN

WORDS: JANE BOXALL



KING PRAWN
WITH NICK
LOOKING COOL IN
SUIT AND TIE.

LONDON SKA-PUNKERS KING PRAWN HAVE BUILT A REPUTATION AS ONE OF THIS COUNTRY'S BEST LIVE ACTS. WE TALKED TO DRUMMER NICK ABOUT LIFE, DRUMS AND TRUE PUNK ANGER...

Hardworking veterans of the UK punk scene, King Prawn have gained a loyal underground following through constant gigging. Their brand of energetic ska-punk is refreshingly diverse: dub, hardcore and rock influences blend with a socially-conscious punk sound. Their album *Surrender To The Blender* was released in 2000, and the band's current tour coincides with *Moon Ska's* re-release of the two previous King Prawn albums – their 1996 debut *First Offence*, and 1998's *Fried In London*.

Prawn drummer Nick is enthusiastic about the band's fourth album, which is due for release later this year, provisionally titled *Nasty Piece Of Work*. "It's a really nice mixture – less chaotic than our other albums but still as diverse. I've written a few of the songs on the album, which I've never done before, but I've got a sequencer

now and so I've been up all night bashing things out, working out bass lines and horn parts and string parts and stuff. I find that really satisfying."

Having last year parted from their label, Spitfire, King Prawn financed this latest recording by themselves. "We just got out a bank loan and said, 'Let's have it!' I think we're going to continue to write better tunes as we go along – I think some bands get their first album and that's their peak, 'cos you never have that time and concentration that you put into that first project you did, so everything that comes after that possibly gets lamer and lamer. But I think we're the opposite, we thrive on lean times, and we thrive on challenge. Maybe we're not a great band, but I think we're one of this country's best live bands. It's taken so long to achieve what we have achieved, we've fought against

everything. There's now a scene that there wasn't three years ago. I'm looking forward to this year and to getting out and playing again."

So how important are the band's political lyrics in relation to the music? "I think it's a big part of it," says Nick. "Yeah, definitely. I think without them, the songs could be about anything, but with the edge that the music's got, it kind of lends itself to the lyrics being in that direction. Personally speaking, I'd much rather sing about things that actually matter to people, and that matter to us. I mean, you see so many bands in the scene that we're involved in, and no-one's angry any more, no-one's uptight – everyone's so comfortable and well-to-do, and it's just not punk! You know, punk's about anger, punk's about rebellion, punk's about spirit, and I don't think a lot of these bands have it. I like bands like Capdown. They're friends of ours anyway, they would be even if I didn't like their music 'cos they're top people, but I think the music's good as well."

So where does Nick get his own musical inspiration from? "I listen to a lot of '60s stuff, the original ska and even the second generation stuff. I love The Specials, they're still one of my all-time favourite bands."

What about drumming inspiration? "Drummers – in rock especially – there's very little inspiration to be taken. Speaking as a drummer, I think it's all been done before, there's not anything new. I think the point's to play the drums with your own individual feeling. That's why I've never taken any lessons. That's been to my detriment as well, 'cos I know technically I can be better, but I think I've got good ideas, so that's, I think, the most important thing. You know, you've got to learn to play with your head first before you can play with your arms and your feet." **B**

FIVE FACTS

1 The name King Prawn isn't significant to the band. "I didn't realise we were going to end up with a name that was so dumb, but that's life. It's kept us grounded – you can never get up yourself too much with a band name like King Prawn!"

2 Nick's fave album of 2001 was Mary J Blige's *No More Drama*. "I love pop, so long as it's done well. I'm a fan of songs rather than of bands."

3 King Prawn were Nick's first band in London. "I moved to London cos where I was living, there was nothing going on. I'd been around a year or so, auditioning for various people, but nothing was really taking off."

4 The diversity of King Prawn is one of the reasons Nick enjoys playing. "I'm in a band that plays so many different musical styles. I could die and I'd think, 'I did play a reggae beat, and I did play a hip-hop beat...'"

5 Touring is essential. "It's pretty much constant and ongoing. We're out to Europe again in February and March."

NICK'S GEAR

Nick plays a Yamaha Maple Custom kit with Zildjian cymbals. He has no endorseeships but says he 'could do with some!'