

# Going Swimmingly

It would be fair to say that this time last year **The Phantom Band** were as elusive as their name suggests. Twelve months later, the band are enjoying deluxe Swiss hospitality, can count Peter Buck as a fan and are already knuckling down to their second LP.

Interview Darren Carle

**ALTHOUGH** their debut album *Checkmate Savage* was in the can and awaiting release, a slew of ever-changing names had helped keep the Phantom Band under all but the most diligent of radars. The album, released in January this year, blew all that out of the water, enough at least for the rag you hold in your hands to give the Glaswegian sextet front page billing in February.

Further 'press hype', adulation and European tours followed, along with oddities such as a recent appearance at the Scottish Style Awards. Worried that 'fame' had gone straight to The Phantom's collective head, we spoke with Gerry Hart, Duncan Marquiss and Andy Wake on their tour bus to quiz them on their cat-walk japes.

"Obviously we'd been invited as stylish men," begins bassist Gerry. "It was quite an interesting set up. We were standing backstage and there were all these models popping up all over the place, semi-dressed. Aye, so it was a good experience!" As to what led them to this opportunity, Gerry seems endearingly oblivious. However, this dalliance with 'fame' appears to be a solitary affair. "We've not been asked to launch any cars or electronic products," he laughs. "That'll maybe come in the future. It's amazing the people who make their money like that though. That awful guy Johnny Borrell, he got like £100,000 to launch an iPhone or something and he didn't even invite the rest of his band - he just went along himself to play solo so he could pocket all the money. What a miserable shite!"

Thankfully the Phantoms have spent the year avoiding such pratfalls. When asked to recap on their highlights of 2009, the conversation invariably leads to tales of local culinary delights and opportune moments of al fresco swimming around Europe rather than any industry hob-nobbing. "The woman who was putting on one of our Switzerland gigs owned this ice cream shop and it was all made from fresh unpasteurised milk straight from the cows, so we just ate ice cream all day then went swimming in the Rhine," reminisces keyboardist Andy Wake. "She



of anyone else liking it or it being reviewed even. In terms of pressure, that only comes from ourselves and the pressure to do as much with the band as we can. Time and money constraints are a challenge. We're probably a lot more tired than we were last year"

flavour-of-the-month."

With *Checkmate Savage* almost two years old to the band, that forward-thinking is now being put to good use on their follow-up album, tentatively pencilled in for a March 2010 release. However, at the moment it remains entirely in demo form and Gerry concedes

at once."

Gerry, however, balks at the prospect of limiting their palette to one slogan to their music. "It's not as if we approach it like 'right, what style can we do now?'" he states. "Although, we were listening to a bit of techno the other night and started discussing whether