

Hangin' with the Hitchers

Belfast, an absolutely rocking town and for the second year running host to the Heineken Hot Press Awards. So when Limerick's own, The Hitchers got nominated in the best Irish Single category DROP Correspondent Nick Lane couldn't resist the opportunity to hitch a ride (couldn't resist the corny pun either) with the lads for the mother of all piss ups in the famous Hotel Europa.....



The coolest man in the music business meets Bono

7am and Niall Quinn is not a well man, having spun the decks at Bakers for the last two nights in his new "DJ FAS Course" guise. The Hitchers Drummer is worn out, World Weary and in no mood for the albeit short flight from Shannon to Belfast. "Coffee!!..I must have more coffee" says he to the alarmingly fresh faced Eric Fitzgerald. The Hitchers Guitarist is obviously well rested. Enquiring where the rest of the band are brings a sly snigger from the pair "driving" they respond in perfect harmony - not relishing the 200 odd mile road trip Niall and Eric had been saving their pennies to fly to Belfast.

Twelve hours later and all the band are together rested and tucking into free Heineken at Blackstaff Studios, home of BBC Northern Ireland. The band have just encountered a very bizarre Bus ride all of 80 yards from the Hotel Europa to the Studios. Across the road from the side entrance



A Drunken Irish legend meets Shane Mc Gowan

The two lost dwarves Misery and Baldy!

of the hotel are the offices of the Ulster Unionist Party outside of which were a small band of protesters from Ian Paisley's DUP trying their hardest to chant "No sell out to Dublin" and generally heckle Unionist party members as they arrived from the Stormont talks. But a swelling band of girls aged 8-15 were screaming their heads off across from them as they eagerly awaited the arrival of Boyzone's Ronan Keating. The DUP crowd soon gave up and went home.

In the green room in Blackstaff studios all the Hitchers are huddled in one

corner - are the Hitchers always this insular? How come they're not hobnobbing with the rich, beautiful and famous who's farts smell of lavender?...networking that's it!! how come they're not networking? "I got Ronan Keatings autograph!" enthuses Niall Quinn "it's for my nieces though" (yeah right Niall of course it is!). In a room packed with celebrities Therapy? over there, Ash over there, oh look there's Sinéad O'Connor and there goes Neil Hannon..all the Hitchers seem to be interested in is the free gargle and guessing the combined age of the four girls in the girlyband "Fab". (it was eventually agreed on as 135 years) Andy and Niall are white as sheets having sucked the helium out of a few too many balloons so as to sing "roots bloody roots" mickey mouse style. So who's making the speech if the band's song collects the Silverware? "We didn't win it" slurs Andy "the winners are told ages ago just to make sure they would be about!!!" In the end it's "A life less ordinary" by Ash that takes the honours in the Hitchers category - but no-one seems disappointed "it was cool to be nominated in such a competitive category in the first place" beams bassist Hoss Carnage "I think everyone's a bit too pissed to be disappointed even if they might otherwise have been" and with that he disappears towards the bar in search of his fellow Hitchers. Party on Chaps Party on.

Epilogue

I later encountered, a by now quite pissed, Niall Quinn again.. just after he had his picture taken with Morrissey for the Umpteenth time and just before he curled up on a couch and went sleepy bye byes. He gave me a brief oratory on the wonders of "Laminates" (ID cards doled out for



Sinéad O' Connor realises a life long ambition to be photographed with Sinéad Pine...

these bashes) "See these yokes Nick? they're brilliant..get as pissed as you like....bouncers can't touch you ha!! ha!! Works on em like garlic on a vampire.....

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