



## NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

### WOJTEK THE BEAR

**WHO:** Tam Killean (vocals/guitar), Graham Norris (guitar/vocals), Paul Kirkwood (bass/vocals), Martin McClements (drums)

**WHERE:** Glasgow

**FOR FANS OF:** Teenage Fanclub, REM, Idlewild

**JIM SAYS:** I reckon it was the name that first drew me towards Wojtek The Bear. A great name can often be the first hurdle for any act. Decent music doesn't do any harm either and Wojtek tick both boxes.

The original Wojtek was a brown bear bought as a cub by Polish soldiers in the 1940s. After World War II, his artillery unit was stationed in the Borders and in 1947, he was homed at Edinburgh Zoo. A statue of him with a Polish soldier, was unveiled in the capital's Princes Street Gardens in 2014.

Singer Tam told me: "I stumbled across the story on Wikipedia one night and thought it was amazing. It's one of those things that if you didn't know it was true you'd presume the person telling you about it was at it."

Tam, Graham and Martin started writing songs together two years ago. A debut single *Dead From The Waist Up* followed after a few months. Paul completes the line-up, having made his debut on bass during last year's Celtic Connections festival after just two rehearsals. The momentum grew with a second self-released single *Trivial Pursuit* catching the attention of BBC Radio.

Tam said: "Hearing it played on Radio 1 by Huw Stephens and Lauren Laverne on BBC Radio 6 Music was exciting, and headlining King Tut's for BBC Introducing last August was a bit of a milestone."



The band are now on acclaimed indie label Scottish Fiction. After the singles *Made Out Of Maps* and *Oil & Water*, they release their debut album *A Talent For Being Unreasonable on Friday*.

It's a wonderful record that soars through emotions. As with their previous output, it was produced by Catholic Action's Chris McCrory. Tam said: "We recorded it last year between June and December, recording for a few days here and there. Recording with Chris was great as we've worked with him from the beginning. He gets the sound we're aiming for and knows when to push us, when to challenge us, and when to cut us a bit of slack."

The band will promote the record with gigs on Thursday at Sneaky Pete's in Edinburgh and on Friday at King Tut's in Glasgow. Other dates include Aberdeen, Elgin and Inverness. Wojtek The Bear return to the Highlands for next month's XpoNorth in Inverness. It was there last year that they first forged a relationship with Scottish Fiction. Tam added: "They had a couple of other bands playing. Neil Wilson from the label caught our set and approached us afterwards and we started chatting. We've loved working with them — it's amazing for the whole Scottish scene that there are people like them working so hard for, and championing, new music."

**MORE:** facebook.com/wojtekthebear-band

Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm. See [amazingradio.com](http://amazingradio.com) and [jimgellatly.com](http://jimgellatly.com)

Watch a video of the band playing at: [www.thescottishsun.co.uk](http://www.thescottishsun.co.uk)



by COLAN LAMONT

**BETH Ditto spent 17 years as the unforgettable front-woman of Gossip — but has given up the security of the band to go solo.**

The indie rockers formed in 1999 in Olympia, Washington, and found mainstream success in 2007 with album *Standing In The Way Of Control*.

They hit our TV screens on *The Jonathan Ross Show*, supported Scissor Sisters and even closed the John Peel Stage at Glastonbury.

But the band called it a day in 2016 — and Beth is hitting the road in the UK for the first time as a solo artist.

She is playing Glasgow later this month — the city in which she had her first legal drink — and admits Gossip were particularly inspired by local indie act Yummy Fur.

Two of their members, drummer Paul Thomson and singer/guitarist Alex Kapranos, later found massive success with Franz Ferdinand.

Beth said: "It was years ago but the first place I ever went to outside of the US was Glasgow in 2001."

"I don't remember the club but I met a lot of people I still know to this day."

"I was 19 and it was a small place and that's all I remember."

"It was also the first time I was legally drunk so I had a great time."

"I was under 20 and underage in the US so we had a lot of fun."

### "I'm starting over in most relaxing way"

"Glasgow has always felt like a second home to me and I love it there so much."

"We grew up loving Yummy Fur, they are one of my favourite bands of all-time."

"I grew up idolising Scottish bands of the 90s and they shaped a big part of Gossip's sense of humour. We worshipped them."

Now touring for the first time in almost 20 years on her own, the singer admits it's very different to her travels with Gossip bandmates Brace Paine and Hannah Blilie.

She released her first solo album *Fake Sugar* last year, which included single *Fire*, and this will be the first time she plays the songs in the UK.

But she isn't nervous and instead wants to have as much fun on the road as she did with the band.

She says: "The funniest thing is that there are no expectations and it's nice to be playing shows again."

"They are very chilled slots and some festivals as well."

"Gossip is such a special funny little package, such a weird little group of weirdos

**'I grew up idolising the Scottish bands of the Nineties'**



EXCITED... Beth, main pic, with her bandmates from Gossip, left, and her new album, below left

# Beth's got Gossip on going solo

that got lucky. Now it feels like I'm starting over in the most relaxing and cool way."

Beth, who was brought up by her mother and stepfather, is convinced that her biological dad has Scottish roots.

And she's even considering an ancestry search to find some answers about her background.

The 37-year-old, who now lives in her home state of Oregon, said: "My dad is the man who raised me and I never

knew my real dad but his name is Patterson."

"The first time I went to Scotland I thought I looked like these people, I'm wild, pale, stocky and there's this thing when I'm there that I'm sure I look Scottish."

"The people are super-friendly, super-loving and super-loud — these are my people."

"I think I'd do a family tree. It's hard because I wasn't raised by my real dad and I didn't

know I had another dad. I thought I was a Ditto until I was a teenager."

"My sister did hers and she's a blood Ditto and so are my older brothers and it's weird I have different DNA from them, but I'd like to do it at some time."

"I'm so curious because I feel so Scottish."

● See Beth Ditto at the O2 ABC in Glasgow on May 25  
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