

Screaming Jets frontman Dave Gleeson has a very important message...

“DOWN TOOLS, IT’S DRINKING TIME”

Dave Gleeson re-visits the scene of his greatest plumbing triumphs.



The new Jets line-up checks out accommodation for their next tour.



Dave would never use the THE TRADIE as bog wrap. NEVER!

Dave Gleeson couldn't be happier – his band are about to release a new CD, and he won't have to go back to plumbing!

A lot has happened to Dave Gleeson in the last 18 months. He's turned 40, his wife has just had another child and his beloved Jets have got back on the road – albeit without co-founding member Grant Walmsley.

But don't be fooled. Gleeson, who now lives on a property in Adelaide, isn't mellowing. Shit, no. It's not in his genes. At the end of last year the Jets did 18 gigs in 21 days from Darwin to Western Australia. And his mug was plastered all over billboards for the TV series *It Takes Two*. And that was coming off a gig on the NRL Footy Show.

"Everyone grows up," says Gleeson on hitting the big four zero. "But being in the Jets is the best job in the world and the challenge is to prove we can still rock hard." They can. Big time.

The only difference now is that Gleeson can't afford to get pissed before a gig. He has to provide for his family after all. So he's a pro ... most of the time.

"Being drunk on stage can look really tragic," he says. "When you're young you can get away with it. But a 40-year-old man drunk and dribbling when people have paid \$30 to get in isn't good. But sure, it still happens."

Jets fans know that the last five years or so have been a difficult time for Newcastle's favourite hard-rockin' sons. In 2002 they stopped touring, which was hard on Gleeson, who'd been on the road most of his adult life.

Worse still, he had a mortgage to pay. That's when he re-discovered the joys of tradie life. For two years he worked as a roofer and plumber with a mate in the

Sydney suburb of Balmain. Having done roofing in his teens he was no stranger to the trade, but there was one big obstacle he had to overcome: fear of heights.

"I crawled around up there like Spiderman," he laughs. "But the thing I liked about doing roofs is when you go past in the street you can say, 'We did that bullnose there.'"

He also liked that they knocked off at two and headed straight for the pub.

But what happened when blokes recognised him on site?

"They were great. When *Better* or *Helping Hand* came on the radio, my mate was always quick to point it out to the other blokes. He'd say, 'Listen to that, that's that bloke here!'"

But it wasn't all gee-ups, sometimes clients were plain freaked out.

"There was one time I went and knocked on the door to ask for power at 6:30 in the

DAVE MOUTHS OFF!

On the Pope...
"I grew up a Catholic. JP11 was a good bloke, seemed like a nice grandfatherly type but Ratzenburger or whatever his name is looks suss. I bagged him on stage. I said he was coming down to the gig to go backstage to drink the piss and hang with the hookers."

Kevin Rudd...
"Has he f**ken done anything yet? I was in favour of the change, but what's going on?"

Pamela Anderson...
"Love her. and how wired to the gills did she look on *Big Brother*? Poor thing."

Roofing and plumbing kept Dave Gleeson in the money when the Jets were off the road.

morning. The guy was in pyjamas. I said, 'I need some power, I'm with the plumber.' He was like, 'F***ing hell!' You end up giving a few autographs!"

The downside for Gleeson was plumbing. Although he appreciates the hard yakka that goes into it, it wasn't for him.

"It was hell on earth," he recalls, brutally honest as ever. "We had to dig a seven-foot hole one time to get down to this big junction. It was in Balmain and it had been put there in like 1810 (laughs). I had to go and get a face mask and rubber gloves – and I was just dry-retching all the time I was there. There was poo floating around the joint! It stopped me biting my fingernails, though!"

It was while digging a hole one day and thinking there's gotta be an easier way to make a living, that his life changed for the better. Pointing out the obvious, the bloke he was labouring with told him to start singing again. That's when Gleeson made the solo album *Wanted Man*. Not long after, the Jets were offered a gig and the rest is history.

The new line-up has been a shot in the arm for the band. Although it's different without guitarist Walmsley, the new recruit, Scott Kingman, has forced the band to re-invent itself a little. "Because we've got work on and stuff, when any member leaves you just keep on going. And that's no disrespect to Grant. Any change will make you freshen up. You have to do more rehearsals. You can get lax when you play together all the time and you just hook up for gigs."

Of the new album, which was written with Walmsley, and is due out this month, Gleeson says it'll have some songs that "rock out and some that are beautiful".

And his message to tradies toiling away under the big Aussie sun: "Down tools, it's drinking time." Couldn't agree more, mate. 🍷

STICKY QUICKIES

Strangest groupie request

"A guy came up to me and wanted me to punch him in the face, so he could tell his mates he'd been punched in the face by Dave Gleeson. I said, 'Mate, you're nuts!'"

First sexual experience

"On a cement cricket pitch. There were four of us on the pitch all at equal intervals going for it. They were Catholic girls (laughs)."

Best punch

"On my older brother. He could make you cry with a look – he had me on tenterhooks. One day I snapped and smashed him right in the nose. I saw the tears well up, and I thought I'm f***ing gone. And I was."

Best gig

"When the Newcastle Knights won the grand final in 1997 in Civic Park. The most adrenaline-charged thing we've ever been involved in. To look back and see 80,000 people. We got on the bus with the Knights and I carried on like I'd won the grand final (laughs)."

Most irritating song

"*What If God Was One Of Us*. To get rid of that out of my head I make up ridiculous words. Like, What if God was Succubus."

Rock star debauchery

"The day we got our first record contract signed we wrote our car off, a Toyota Crown, out the front of the house. We jumped on the roof, smashed the windscreens. Then we went out for a drink. We thought we'd be travelling around in limos from now on. We thought, 'Unreal!'"

Worst gig

"In 2004 – I was spastic drunk. I dropped a pill to straighten up on stage. But you live and you learn."

Biggest regret

"In England, soon after Freddie Mercury died – I said he deserved what he got. Magazines pulled stories on us, there was an uproar. But I'm from Newcastle and that's what you learn. But the more you go out in the world, your perception changes. Now I know that gay guys are good blokes."