



WHERE EAGLES DARE

OLAF TYARANSEN – not a man who rates *On The Border* as one of his Desert Island Discs – endures one

of the least thrilling evenings of his life at **THE EAGLES'** press conference in the RDS.



THIS ARTICLE is specifically addressed to all of those readers who possess neither a radio nor a television and who rarely bother to read the daily press or surf the Internet. If this applies to you, then read on in wonder. Presumably, however, the rest of the western world is already well aware of the fact that recently reformed 1970s AOR supergroup The Eagles have just embarked on the European leg of their *Hell Freezes Over* tour, which kicked off with two sold-out Irish gigs last week, and will have seen, heard or read all about it by now.

I only make this assumption because it seemed that representatives from just about every TV station, radio programme, music magazine and broadsheet in the EU were present at the press conference organised to promote the tour, held in the Dodder Room at Dublin's RDS on the eve of the debut gig last Thursday, with all five members of the band in attendance.

After keeping us waiting for half an hour or so, the band eventually trooped out to tumultuous applause and were immediately confronted by a gaggle of photographers who seemed to shoot more film in their allocated three minutes than David Bailey used in his entire career. Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Don Felder, Joe Walsh and Timothy B. Schmit looked disgustingly healthy for a bunch of ageing rockers and, much to my disappointment, all had full heads of hair (if they hadn't, I could have asked them why they didn't call themselves The Bald Eagles this time around). When the photographers finished, the band took their seats and the interrogation began in earnest. Unfortunately, most of the time it was far too earnest.

The first question came from some Dutch Pepe Le Punk-type journo. "I haf a question for Meezter Don Henley pleeze," he stated in an accent so thick that you could have made a sandwich with it. "Meezter Henley, after selling 100 million records worldwide, waz it real prezzure on you to write new material for the *Hell Freezes Over* album?"

"There was some," Henley answered. "We didn't really look at it as a body of new work, it was more retrospective material. We had a lot of other things going on – a television show was being filmed and we were

getting ready to go on tour – so we did the best we could given a short timeframe. We look forward to writing some new material, perhaps in the future. We can't really keep on recycling the older stuff, although it seems to be working just fine." (*much laughter*)

The *Sunday World's* Eddie Rowley took it upon himself to welcome the band to Ireland (as did most of the Irish hacks who got to ask questions) and asked what took them so long getting here. "It's a long swim," came the glib reply. Personally, I would've expected a bunch of Eagles to be able to fly!

Somebody asked the band how they felt they'd improved as musicians over the years. Glenn Frey took the question: "Your whole mandate is just to improve. You know, life is about improvement, whether it's as a musician or a singer or as a songwriter, so hopefully we're just getting better. We're all definitely singing and playing better than we ever have; certainly, the band is better now than it was in the 1970s. We're a lot more focussed these days."

When asked to retrace the steps which led to The Eagles' 1994 reunion, Joe Walsh blankly refused but, figuring that it was a fair enough question, Glenn Frey eventually answered. "Well, from the time that we disbanded in 1980, there were always offers on the table for us to get back together. We were close to doing it around 1990, we talked about it a little bit but, you know, sometimes there's a little bit of serendipity involved in this, and I think what just happened was that everybody's lives started to line up in a way that now it made sense for all of us."

Asked whether the band were likely to stay together this time around, he replied: "We're the one-day-at-a-time band. We have no real plans except to make it through to August 6th. If we break up again, though, you won't hear about it. We'll do it quietly."

The Eagles' reunion album and tour are both named *Hell Freezes Over* because that was the answer given by Don Henley a decade ago, asked when the band were ever going to reform. He's obviously changed his mind since, but rumours still abound that the band aren't getting on much better this time around. These rumours have been given further credence by the fact that all five members of the band are nesting in separate hotels during their stay in Dublin. When asked how they were getting on these days however, the band slated that they were "doing just fine", and reasoned that they weren't all staying together due to various family commitments. Birds of a feather may flock together, but Eagles obviously need a bit of space.

And have age and family commitments mellowed the band out over the years? When asked about their drug intake, Joe Walsh replied: "The



The Eagles: absolutely agog with excitement at their press conference in Dublin. Pic: Cathal Dawson

Eagles don't take drugs and we've found that the band works very well that way. It's a large beast we ride and the only way for us to keep it under control is for everybody to stay real clear. I mean, we came from a generation that experimented with all kinds of substance. I wouldn't say we don't know about 'em, but we've grown up a bit and we have children now, so think our message is that you can be a damn good rock band without all that stuff. I don't know why rock people who die horrible deaths from substance abuse are made such martyrs. That's a bad example for young kids growing up and we're here to show that there's life after all of that."

And speaking of bad examples to young kids growing up, the final question worth repeating here was asked by the inimitable Sean Moncrieff, whose bright yellow suit was so eye-catching that the band felt he deserved a chance to ask them something. Sean's question was put to Timothy B. Schmit (who hadn't been asked very much throughout the conference), and it was as irreverent as you'd expect. He wanted to know what the B in his name stood for. "Bruce," came the reply, amidst much hilarity, and on that note the press conference ended, leaving the band free to soundcheck for the following day's gig and me free to file some of the most unexclusive copy I've ever written. Sorry, but seeing as *Hot Press* is a fortnightly magazine, most of the quotes I've used here are probably already as familiar to you as the chorus of 'Hotel California'.

But that's reformed supergroups for you. Everything they do has been done a hundred times before, and it's only the setting that changes. Remember, you read it here last. ■