P S O T Y Interview

This interview was conducted with Scott Gowan of Pet Slimmers Of The Year (PSOTY) on January 18, 2014, in promotion and anticipation of the band's exclusive contribution to Abridged Pause Recordings' Various Artists compilation *Billowing Tempestus*.

-Hello Scott. Let's start with a relatively obvious question. What's the story behind an odd band name like "Pet Slimmers of the Year"? Who's responsible for finding it?

The band name came about during our first couple of jam sessions once we'd decided we wanted to do the band. It came from the 2006 edition of *Schott's Almanac*. I found it while reading the book in the toilet at Steve and Dale's house where we used to rehearse. The full title was "Mysty the Cat – Pet Slimmer of the Year 2006". Dale thought it would be a hilarious band name (although that's come under some dispute over the years to a point where I now get the blame) but we decided it would do as a working title.

You may not know it, but in August of 2014 we abbreviated it to "P S O T Y" as we felt we'd outgrown the comedy name. Unfortunately, a Polish acquaintance of ours advised us that it means "pranks" in Polish… seems kind of ironic now.

-What other bands did each of you play in prior to forming Pet Slimmers of the Year? Have you also played in or recorded with any other bands since starting Pet Slimmers of the Year?

We've all been in a few bands prior to Pet Slimmers of the Year and some are still current. I'll try my best to list them all here. Steve has played in A Thousand Fires, Ansae and Cell 69 and currently plays in Cameltoe, Arms of the Mountain and Carry the Flame. Dale has played in A Thousand Fires, Wake and Zen Merit and currently plays in Cameltoe. I have played in A Thousand Fires, Ansae and Zen Merit.

With the exception of Ansae, Arms of the Mountain and Carry the Flame, all the projects have recorded material that can be found on the internet, somewhere!

-How did Pet Slimmers of the Year get together in January of 2008? How did it all happen, who initiated the first jam and where did each of you meet?

We all met through music related friends around 2006. I had written some tracks and a friend of mine was playing drums and he knew a bass player who turned out to be Steve. So we had a few rehearsals, named our band “Ansae” and played a three-song set at some shitty pub.

Dale and Steve were already friends and lived in the same house with Dale’s brother, Ross. Those three made three quarters of the band “Wake” at the time. During this time Dale and Steve had put together a three-pieces band called “A Thousand Fires” which I later joined to make it a four-piece. We put Pet Slimmers of the Year together after A Thousand Fires came to an end. Our exact conversation was at a pub when we drunkenly decided that we wanted to do an instrumental band. “Like a heavy version on Mono” was the exact phrase. We got together at Steve and Dale’s house that week and started jamming.

-Do you have any recollection of when, where and with whom your first show was?

I think that our first show was at a bar called Radius and we were booked to play for an event along with a number of other bands, including our friends Columbian Necktie. I think we only had a couple of songs and it was a reasonable success for a first show.

-Was the song “Urquidez” ever recorded? Do you have many unreleased songs?

“Urquidez” was recorded along with another track, titled

“Everything I Have Ever Done Has Led Me To This Point”, both written within the same period. Neither were ever properly released but you can listen to both on our Soundcloud page. There’s a couple more songs here and there that never made the cut. They normally remain untitled as they’re unfinished.

-How did you hook up with Lost Children Net Label, which wound up releasing your first two EPs: “Pet Slimmers of the Year” in January of 2009, and “…And the Sky Fell” in June of 2010? How well do you think they promoted the band? Did you ever play shows with other bands on the label?

I think it was Dale who emailed them, as they seemed like a good outlet for our particular genre at the time. We had friends in an instrumental outfit at the time called Double Handsome Dragons, who were also on that label. We played a lot of shows with those guys. They were from the same area and we got paired off with them a lot for shows to a point where, if one band was playing, you could probably guess the other would be there as well. Double Handsome Dragons was the only band from the label that we ever played with.

I think the label was really good for the band. There was no negotiation or anything, they just agreed to add our EPs to the archive. It was downloaded a lot and it was a great stepping stone for our first releases.

-You guys self-released CD versions of your first two EPs. Who designed the spectacular new artwork for “And the Sky Fell”?

The artwork for “…And the Sky Fell” was done by our good friend Vincent Drummond, aka The sleepwalker. We had an idea of what we wanted and Vince tirelessly hand water coloured the whole thing. Even the font for the title was scanned out of old books and put together letter by letter. We appreciate that kind of detail. I still think it’s an impressive piece of art.

-There seems to be different cuts of the first EP out there,

with different running times. Did it have anything to do with new mixes or were they just edited?

I think most of the differences came from the transitions between the tracks. The samples weren't added until later and I think the wrong version was used for the digital release on our Bandcamp page. Both the CD and the original digital version should have been the same. It wasn't until someone else pointed it out that we knew they were missing.

-How many CD copies of each EPs were pressed and how long did it take for them to sell out?

We had about 200 of the first EP, and 200 of the "..And The Sky Fell" EP. They're all gone now and I don't even think that I own a copy!

-In early 2012, Pet Slimmers of the Year signed on with music manger Adam Mortaro, who was starting his company, Adequate Management (which later changed name to Anchor Music). Was this a turning point for the band? What did he do for you?

We have to give a lot of credit to Adam for the amount of discipline he pushed us into. We were just daydreaming when we first started working together. He gave us direction and pushed us to getting the tracks together for the "Fragment of Uniforms" album. Adam's a very driven man when it comes to music and he used that to poke and prod pretty much everyone that might be interested in hearing us, and some that weren't. Some of the relationships with promoters that we still have now are from our time working with Adam and he got us on a lot a shows in 2012 and 2013.

-None of you appear in your music video for "Days Since I Disappeared". Were you present during the filming? Do you have any anecdotes about the making of the video? Can you talk about the development of the video; was there a script with storyboards?

We never saw the filming for the video, unfortunately. I wrote the concept for it and we handed that over to the Phil Berridge at Creative Junkie (director/producer) and left him to it. There was a basic storyboard that we talked through with Phil, he then made a treatment that we were happy with and we were hands off from there. We didn't want to be in it or be poking around while it was being filmed, we're not film makers! We trusted him enough to do a good job and he certainly did. The main actor from the video is actually a mutual friend of ours and of the directors, Vincent Drummond, the same guy that did the artwork for "…And The Sky Fell". The lady in the video was cast by the director for the part. We never actually met her.

-This first single, "Days Since I Disappeared", ended up being delayed by sixteen months (it was recorded in April of 2012, but only released in August of 2013). What held it back for so long?

Remember when I said we suffered with lack of direction earlier? Yeah, that! Kidding, we were trying to put the album together at the time and we were trying to decide between an EP or an album and exactly what we wanted to do with it. We ended up releasing it on it's own as we wanted people to hear that we were still writing.

-How did you get signed to Candlelight Records? What kind of deal did they offer you guys and how did it go down?

While I can't talk about the details of the actual deal, I can say how it came about. I got us booked to play a show with Year of No Light and a band we really love called The Mire [at The Black Heart in Camden]. At that show was a guy from Candlelight. He pimped us around with his colleagues at work and Candlelight contacted us to see if we could work something out. In fact, I believe they said that they wanted to "see if there's any way they can help us". It's all pretty exciting. We had another meeting at The Black Heart and chatted about

what we wanted to do and this and that. Darren Toms, who was our contact at Candlelight, took us over to the Underworld to see a show, I think it was Joey Jordison's new band, Scar the Martyr. We ended up drinking rum with two of the members of Dragonforce and talking about the title of "post metal" being stupid because "metal wasn't finished yet". It was an unusual night to say the least.

-Less than a year after signing with Candlelight Records, all of your social media pages were changed from "Pet Slimmers of the Year" to "P S O T Y". Was the label pushing for a name change?

Oddly enough, no. We wanted to change it. The label didn't mind what we were called, they kinda liked it being so odd, but we felt we had outgrown the name. So we developed a logo and did a big change.

-Initially, a third EP was planned for release in 2012. But instead you released the album "Fragments of Uniforms" in October 2013/April 2014. Who's idea was it to upgrade the EP into an album?

This came from that delay we talked about earlier. We always wanted to do an album but we hadn't put enough material together that we thought would sound good on one record or that we were entirely happy with. We decided an album was the way we wanted to go so we got on with it, and about time too!

-"Fragments of Uniforms" was released on CD and digitally through Candlelight Records and on double 12″ vinyl through Back on Black. Did the album do well?

We're not entirely sure to be perfectly honest. The feedback from the label was good so, from our perspective, it was good. I don't think it's gone platinum just yet though!

-Has Candlelight Records offered to finance another music video?

We’re working out what the plan for this year is as we speak. We’re working on new music so it would be good to get something new out this year but we haven’t decided exactly what that is yet.

-Your latest song to be released, “Untitled”, appears on the Abridged Pause Recordings compilation, “Billowing Tempestus”. What’s the story with this song, where does it come from and why was it left off previous releases?

We wrote and recorded this during the “…And The Sky Fell” sessions. We had about eight or nine tracks that we thought were studio ready, but once they were recorded, we felt that a couple didn’t fit and/or felt like they needed something else. This one in particular just didn’t fit the record’s theme. To be honest, we thought it was a little too cheery for “…And the Sky Fell”. We’re cheery people but we don’t make cheery music.

-This is your second time working with Abridged Pause Recordings, which released another exclusive song in 2009. Can you talk about “Brujas” that appeared on “Diluvian Temperals”?

“Brujas” was recorded in September 2008, shortly after “Urquidez” and “Everything I Have Ever Done Has Led Me to This Point”. We wrote that to be a stand alone track and we liked the grove of it. We haven’t played it in years but we used to play it all the time back in 2008 and 2009.

-What do you have planned for 2016? When can fans expect a new release from Pet Slimmers of the Year and will it definitely be on Candlelight Records?

We’re writing new music for an EP that will definitely be released this year.