

# creature comfort

**Siouxsie Sioux** a disco dolly? Who'd have thought it: the one time 'punk goth goddess' of Siouxsie and the Banshees getting down to drag queen Sylvester?

"My mood is very up at present and co-incidentally, I've found myself tuning in to this French radio station that plays non-stop Seventies disco," she says, on the line from her home in the south-west of France. "All those fabulous, dramatic string arrangements, a la Sylvester's *Mighty Real*. It's very uplifting."

My how times change. And styles so far as Siouxsie's image goes. From her platinum blonde crop and bondage gear of the Seventies, to her Eighties kabuki/goth glam garb, this was *the* female face of punk. Siouxsie's fierce beauty launched the look of a thousand wannabes, and she was an artist who constantly reinvented her identity way before Madonna or Kylie came onto the scene. These days, the diva's look is, as she puts it, "dressed to kill", and indeed, a 40-something punk survivor has no right to look this good! Being an idol to the masses is not something Siouxsie relishes. "It's positively damaging to my health. I don't fancy being turned to stone or dipped in gold!"

Siouxsie's buoyant mood springs from finally achieving creative independence with her band, The Creatures, an outfit that emerged in the early 1980s as a side project for her and Banshees drummer, now husband, Budgie. With three albums and a swag of EPs delivered over a fifteen year period, The Creatures were quietly prolific and explorative while the Banshees' creativity slowly imploded. In 1991, Siouxsie and Budgie relocated to France, having outgrown London and finally put the Banshees to bed in 1996, shaking off the shackles of a constricting major label contract in the same year. So they did what any innovative musicians tired of towing the corporate line would do: set up their own label, Sioux Records.

"Our creativity is up and running and we're forever trying to keep up with it," says Sioux. "Along with the added responsibility of running our label and managing ourselves, there doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day! At the moment we're writing and setting up a recording facility at home."

While the Banshees were born out of punk's DIY adage, they stood out from the pack, with a sound that bypassed the venomous rock of The Sex Pistols and

The Clash, rather experimenting with Middle Eastern-influenced instrumentation, and lyrics which delved into the unnerving realms of the psyche. The Creatures took this sense of esotericism further, dispensing with guitars and opting for the bare bones of drum and voice to create raw, primal sounds in an era of fluffy synth-pop.

The Creatures have since embraced new technology, with an impressive website that both Siouxsie and Budgie contribute to regularly, and a revived passion for electronica, mostly evident on their 1999 album *Anima Animus*. But the crux of their sound still revolves around Budgie's frenetic percussion

and Siouxsie's vocals, which shift from menacing whispers through girlie squeals to blood-chilling howls. It's a sound best experimented with live, as their Sydney shows last September certainly proved. Budgie's pounding percussion throbbed and rattled the crowd, while Siouxsie's vocals sliced into skulls as she slithered and stalked about the stage. Siouxsie and Budgie, it seems, are the only ones still living the punk ethos at a time when it is more relevant than ever. "[Punk] was a real wake-up call to complacency and bloated self-importance, albeit too brief!" Siouxsie recalls. "It's only now that it seems to have come full circle."

For Siouxsie, the revolution can't have come soon enough. "With the Internet and digital recording, we seem to be at a point where true autonomy is becoming a reality. The prospect of seeing a greedy and unimaginative [music] industry facing extinction, is truly heart-warming and worth fighting for." Whoops.

Virginia Muzik

The creatures website is a kooky one. Visit [www.thecreatures.com](http://www.thecreatures.com).



**SO SIOUX ME:** Siouxsie Sioux with Budgie in drag, both off the Banshees bandwagon but still keeping things glam-punk-ish with The Creatures.