



Still rocking:
Shihad frontman
Jon Toogood.
DOMINION POST

One rule

Belinda McCammon talks to Shihad frontman Jon Toogood about the highs and lows of the band's 20-year career.

TWENTY years after alternative metal rock band Shihad formed, lead singer Jon Toogood has only one rule, to keep reinventing. It's a rule that's working.

The band's seventh studio album *Beautiful Machine* debuted this month at number one and went gold on its first day of release. Toogood says every one of Shihad's albums have deliberately been different, playing a large factor in why the band is still here 20 years later. "We've reinvented ourselves every time."

Toogood says the reinvention challenges the band members, comprising himself, Phil Knight, Karl Kippenberger and Tom Larkin. "We're doing it because we want to go down as many paths. "While we're together with this group of four guys making music, who pretty much get on really well, we might as well use that opportunity, to go on a journey and discover new ways around music. "When it comes to a new album, the rule is 'what haven't we done?'"

It's that attitude Toogood says which gives the band "a pretty broad pallet to draw on".

Originally from Wellington, Toogood and Larkin formed the band in 1988 while still in school.

In 1999 the band relocated to Melbourne where all four members now live.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, with the band wanting to tackle the North American market, they decided to change their name to something less contentious, and settled on *Pacific*, releasing an album under that monicker in 2002.

However, after failing to make a dent in the United States and with much outcry from their Australasian fans, in 2004, the band announced they were changing their name back to Shihad.

Toogood says he is not surprised that 20 years later Shihad are still together, the only thing he is really surprised about is that it's been 20 years.

"We've spent our whole lives looking forward. "We're constantly after a show going 'right what are we going to do tomorrow night that's better than our last show? What can we do differently?'"

"It's the same when it comes to records. "I'm not sitting there going 'wow, that third album we made is wicked' or whatever it's more like, 'what can we do to make this a better band?'"

"We're always constantly searching."

Toogood dismisses the idea that the constant looking forward means the band misses appreciating what the band are creating now.

"There's nothing more in the moment in my life than an hour on stage. "That's as in the moment as it gets for me, I get those little periods all the time."

When you're involved in writing a song and recording it and making sure you're singing well or singing from the heart, is when you're really in the moment, he says.

"I'm in the moment and my heads in the future but I don't really spend a lot of time looking back."

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Man and honorary men assemble

MATE
MARK WILSON



IN Australia it's hats and horses that stop the nation; in the United States it's Janet Jackson's right nipple on Superbowl Sunday.

Auckland stops when we cut the power off from down south and recently Wellington took the cake as they stopped to watch the progress of seafood defrosting at Te Papa.

Down south we usually chug along through thick and thin. We are not easily star struck and the sight of a nipple on Sunday just equals another KG of milk solids in the bank!

However, once a year as the days draw in, the cows dry off and the lambs head to the works, things across the province grind to a halt. Southland isn't the only place on earth to see such an annual trek to historically significant congregation spots.

Muslims have the pilgrimage to Mecca to pay homage — noble indeed but it isn't half as fun as the long tractor ride through the swamp to the mai mai, dusting off the pump-action in true Arnold Schwarzenegger style and letting a few rounds rip into the sky above, hoping that your prayers will be answered and plump mallards will rain from above.

The first weekend in May is etched into calendars years in advance. Rugby has realised its place and relinquished its hold on Saturday mornings just for a moment and the women flee from the homesteads to the safe and tranquil surroundings of the city to do what women do.

This is a man's weekend right from the mighty 6am fry-up the cold Speight's or warming mug of home brew Waimahaka Swamp Juice rum to the unfortunate side effect of duck shooting plucking, gutting and waking up Sunday morning with a herd of cattle in your head and a carpet stuck to the back of your throat.

Of course, the odd, extremely committed, farmer's daughter can sometimes become an honorary man for the weekend. It involves giving up the hair straighteners, donning the cammo jacket replacing make up for green and black face paint and putting up with the — always entertaining yet often extremely inappropriate for PC campaigners and feminists alike — male mai mai banter.

This rules out all but the most hardened and resilient of women and leaves only a special breed of iron-jawed, thick-skinned creations.

Speaking of which I'm sure Helen Clark, once she has finished as PM, has the necessary attributes to prosper in such a role but how welcome she would be on a Southland farm would be another story.

When this hits the breakfast tables most good hunters will have already shaken off the previous night's excesses and ventured out into what we hope is a gale force southerly and hail squalls.

Good luck to you all and here's hoping for another memorable weekend down south.

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