

brainpool

“We don’t *plan* to change the world, but we do all we can,” says David, lead singer of Brainpool.

That’s quite a change for a band that made it big singing for pre-teens. Brainpool’s history is one of major transformations, from pop darlings to sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued rock adventurers and Internet music distribution pioneers with a new greatest-hits album under their belts.

The band got together in 1991 with their original lineup: David Birde, vocals; Christoffer Lundquist, bass and production; Jens Jansson, drums; and singer Janne Kask. Initially they were happy as a pop band signed with Epic. They loved the money, luxury and the attention and didn’t think about any messages they might be sending. From 1994-1996 they put out three “crispy power pop” records, as Lundquist calls them: *Soda*, *Painkiller*, and *Stay Free*.

Their tone changed drastically with Kask’s departure in 1997 and with the band’s 1999 album *You Are Here*, with its New Order influences and spooky themes of isolation in a crowded metropolis. But the biggest change was yet to come.

“We realized our audience was getting younger,” says David. “We were 26, we were smelly and unshaven and drunk. There were 11- and 12-year-old fans who wanted a hug. We just thought it was so wrong. That’s when we realized we had to do something else,” says David.

In 2000, Brainpool left Epic and began working on *Junk*, a sweeping two-disc rock opera set in a not-too-distant future where international mega-companies own everything, including Brainpool. The biggest of these is Junk, Inc., which is gradually taking over the world one piece at a



Photo: Daniel Bexell

time in order to push its forgettable, disposable products. The company buys out Brainpool and recasts them as Junkpool, house band of a legendary rock club also recently bought by Junk and revamped in the name of profit.

David, who was working at an advertising agency when he wrote the story, isn’t afraid that the album might be too political; the band describes the album as a criticism of modern consumption-crazed society, which “produces junk, talks crap and stinks like trash.”

In 2004, Brainpool performed *Junk* with Sweden’s Malmö Symphonic Orchestra. The concert was broadcast on Swedish National Radio and television, featured 60 classically trained musicians and had 10,000 people in attendance. The 9 p.m. news was even postponed as *Junk* aired.

2005 brought their first greatest-hits album, *We Aimed to Please*, which collects hits, demos, videos and previously unreleased songs.

Members of Brainpool also founded Junk Musik, an Internet-based label that can record, mix and release artists’ songs in a matter of days. The label is closely tied with Christoffer’s Aerosol Grey Machine Studio in rural Sweden, which has hosted artists like Roxette, Per Gessle, The Cardigans, Ed Harcourt, Ulf Lundell and The Magic Numbers.