



Colin Hemmingsen's Column

Popular Music In Schools?

On a breakdown of the programme ratings for the various radio stations in Auckland, it can be seen that the main percentage of the listening audience prefers music other than classical, and yet an education in popular music is almost unobtainable in New Zealand.

In my last article, I talked about music education in relation to music reading, and I would like to take this subject further and discuss how the government in its various bodies and forms, supports music education. As also mentioned in my last article, "so long as our schools and universities spend 95% of our monies on a musical style which supports only 6% of our working musicians, then they are not serving us properly".

In high schools, for example, Jazz is the only concession to popular music, and in the University Entrance exam, it is an optional question worth only two marks. In the actual syllabus, it is represented by studying three works, the most up-to-date of which is the Modern Jazz Quartet. What about Herbie Hancock, Dave Sanbourn, Stanley Clark etc? Will we have to wait another ten years before this music is included in the syllabus?

Wellington Polytech has a part-time Jazz course run by Roger Fox, and this would qualify as the only state supported popular music education in New Zealand.

Now for universities. A clearer picture is gained by comparing what a classical musician is given with what a popular musician is not given. Firstly it must be established that traditional harmony is not the same thing as modern harmony. It has different values, terminology and points of view, so a modern musician would find much that is irrelevant to his field, and so it can be said that universities do not provide an education for the popular musician. If you wish to study guitar, saxophone or electric bass for example, you will find that universities do not even offer tuition in these instruments.

The classical musician is supported by public funding of his education and of his orchestras, operas etc, and he may further his studies overseas by gaining a government grant (Arts Council). It seems then, that support can be obtained from the Arts Council for advanced study, but since there is no education available for the popular musician on the rudimentary level, it would be difficult for him to obtain a grant for advanced study, unless he first spends time at a university, studying a curriculum totally unsuited to his needs. I think it is accurate to say that the Arts Council has spent around \$800 in the popular music field since its inception and yet according to an article in the *Listener* a month or so back, music receives a generous slice of the total money allocated by the Arts Council. Popular musicians miss out once again.

I had applied to the Arts Council for a grant to help run the Music School I have established on a limited basis in Auckland, but was turned down as the Arts Council deems it within the realms of the Education Department rather than themselves. I find that reasonable to a point, but the wheels of bureaucracy turn slowly, and in the

meantime what happens to those who want education now; where do we find the teachers, qualified theoretically and practically to fill these positions?

I know personally, of several musicians who are seriously thinking of taking the trip across the Tasman to join the thriving Jazz course offered at The Conservatorium of Music in Sydney. The question to ask now is, "will they return, or is this just another part of the 'brain drain'?"

There are many misunderstandings and prejudices, both by the 'classical' and 'popular' musician, but having studied and performed in both areas, I know that there are worthwhile intellectual and artistic satisfactions in both. I can therefore see no real justification for placing educational emphasis on the music of the past, while at the same time neglecting to educate for the future. Like any other art or science, music evolves, and if we neglect to educate for the future, we will continue to be dissatisfied with the standard of innovation and creativity in popular music.

It seems that it is now up to you, the Musician, to start demanding the right to a music education, the right which is long overdue. Write to your local university requesting a course in modern harmony and improvisation, in arranging and modern composition, in electronic music (related to the modern idiom) and film writing. Ask for tuition in guitar, electric bass and saxophone, and any other instrument you wish to study.

In my experience in New Zealand, classical musicians are treated as artists and popular musicians are treated as labourers. Until you, the musicians, make your needs known, standards and conditions will remain the same, not only musically but also professionally.

Letters

RIP IT UP P.O.Box 5689, Auckland.

Punks Reply

It was nice to see the article on the Reptiles and The Scavs in your last issue. However there are a few points that need to be sorted out.

- 1) His name is Billy Planet not Billy Boots.
- 2) The Reptiles play nearly all their own stuff. The non-original material consists of two Damned songs, one Stooges song and one Stones song, all of which are so rearranged that they are practically unrecognisable.
- 3) It was a charity gig and not enough of you bastards (the great apathetic general public).
- 4) Potential? Who needs potential when you're one of the few worth listening to in Auckland.
- 5) Ask anyone at the Elam gig how loud we can play.
- 6) Shaun Anfrayd and Sissy Spunk have now both left due to "Musical differences" and are now being replaced by one fella who will be unveiled at the next gig.
- 7) Who pissed on the floor? Somebody said it was Frank (sorry Francis) Stark, but we could be wrong.
- 8) You're bloody right it will happen soon. People are getting pretty bored with the same old Steely Dan, Stones and Disco re-treads coming from people like Voxpop and Hello Sailor.

Keep listening for more.

Symon p.p. Partisan Politik
Auckland

Colin Hemmingsen's article in the second issue of *Rip It Up* impressed me greatly. I agree with him on all fronts — the

discos are robbing musicians of their livelihood and there is an apathetic attitude among musicians.

I also agree with the fact that learning theory can only lead to greater heights of inspiration and improvisation. Steely Dan couldn't possibly play what they do by ear, and guys who do play by ear can, at their best, only copy them and imitate them and imitate their style. One thing you should consider however is the NZ public itself. Idiots in pubs don't demand great musical proficiency from musicians. It doesn't take much skill to plough through "Baby Blue" or "Pearly Shells". Despite this sickening fact, this article struck me as a ray of hope — particularly the part about Colin's school in Auckland. Perhaps the public is better educated in Auckland or at least has some taste.

J. Telford
Christchurch, 5

Over the last few months, it has been a growing Sunday night habit to go for a training run for next Saturday's game. At least as far as everyone else is concerned I'm going for a run. In fact, I do run — for about 100 yards, then — I sit on my bum and pull out... no, not a plum, but the product of a plant that will soon replace the Silver Fern as our national emblem.

I then cruise home and listen to the best damn jock in the land on Minority Radio, 1480, 7-12. This would be the best source of radio music available and one helluva education to boot.

But I'm constantly surprised at the number of people completely unaware of this amazing source of entertainment. The last month or so has been nothing short of brilliant — especially the show Rock Doc did on guitar players. Never in my life have I experienced such a brilliant line-up of music on radio and just like the magazine you're reading now, it's absolutely free. Keep it up Barry.

Anonymous

Congratulations on the birth of *Rip It Up* — the only periodical in New Zealand giving adequate coverage to rock and other contemporary musics.

Nitpicker that I am, I would like to draw your attention to a goof in the second issue. In the otherwise fine piece on Frankie Miller, his early band Sock It To 'Em JB was not named after a Bar-Kays hit but a disco favourite by Rex Garvin and the Mighty Cravers.

Trifles aside, *Rip It Up* is doing an excellent job particularly in giving exposure to NZ artistes and little-known major overseas talents such as Flora Purim and Al Jarreau. Keep it up.

Graham Donlon

New Plymouth

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