

RIP IT UP No. 7. Dec-Jan.



Dragon: Kerry Jacobsen, Robert Macklin Taylor, Marc Hunter, Todd Hunter and Paul Hewson.

Tales of New Zealand band's Making-it-big-in-Australia have been frequent this year — Mother Goose, the continuing success story of the Enz and so on. Well, here's yet another one. What's more this particular success story promises to turn into perhaps the biggest of them all.

Dragon, one-time Auckland based band, have now racked up four hit singles in Australia. Their first album *Sunshine* went gold and their just-released second, *Running Free*, is already gold on the strength of orders alone. But this may well be only the beginning, for three months ago they joined the small coterie of artists on the prestige American label, Portrait. The other acts on the label are - Heart, Burton Cummings, Joan Baez, and now, Dragon. Impressive, huh?

Success like this has not come easy. Todd Hunter the band's bass player related their story via a trans-Tasman phone call — "When we arrived in Australia we hit the pits completely. We had our equipment ripped off, we had no work, and then our drummer died." The death of long-time Dragon member Neil Storey was a shock to all and naturally hit the band hardest of all. "We were horrified, just horrified."

A week after Neil's death, however, their first single, "This Time", began to chart and replacement drummer Kerry Jacobsen was flown in from NZ to complete the line-up as it now stands

— Todd Hunter on bass, with his brother Marc on vocals, guitarist Robert Taylor and keyboards player Paul Hewson.

Their recording contract came about after Peter Dawkins, a NZ producer working for CBS in Sydney, saw them performing in a wine bar where, "the owner would pay us a bowl of mince each for the night's work and then we had to borrow money to pay for the taxi fare home." Nevertheless, Dawkins saw the potential even though Todd admits that the band were "pretty rough at the time." The result of the collaboration with Dawkins was one hell of an album. Titled *Sunshine*, it displayed their strongly melodic songs wedded to a crisp, efficient, funky sound. It was the break they needed.

Today the problems of how to pay the rent are behind them. As Todd asserts, "the money's really good now and we don't have to work as hard as we once did. For the past year we haven't stopped but now we're having three nights off a week. And with managers, press agents and all you can be screened from the people you don't want to see, which makes it more relaxed in its own way."

But their recent signing to Portrait promises to bring on the biggest changes yet. In April Dragon will move to the States where the label will set them up with all the road crew, PA and equipment necessary for them to begin

touring, probably as support act on other tours. Indeed the extent of Portrait's commitment to Dragon is staggering.

They were selected out of three hundred acts auditioned from around the world. And Todd relates that the label will put "five hundred grand into promoting us in the States." That's \$500,000 to you and me. Furthermore, the label boss has reportedly pledged not to sign another rock'n'roll act until Dragon have sold a million records. Now that's big business.

I asked Todd if the band felt confident enough to handle such high-powered promotion. His reply was curt and confident: "F\*\*k yeah."

In fact the Rock Cruise in December, which brings them to Auckland for one concert on the 21st, will "enable us to get fit and prepare ourselves for touring and America next year." The concert may well be New Zealand's last chance to see Dragon for some time (though there is the possibility of a concert here in January).

As a parting shot, any message for the folks back in NZ, Todd? "Yeah... we miss you all, the weather's neat and we're looking forward to getting back." And I'll bet there are more than a few people looking forward to seeing them back.

Alastair Dougal

## DRAGON AT ORATIA FESTIVAL

Dragon, NZ band who have already broken the Australian market and are now on their way to America, headline the Great Western Music Festival to be held at Mollers Farm, Oratia on Sunday the 15th January. This one-day event will be held in a site of fifteen acres of cleared land in a forest valley.

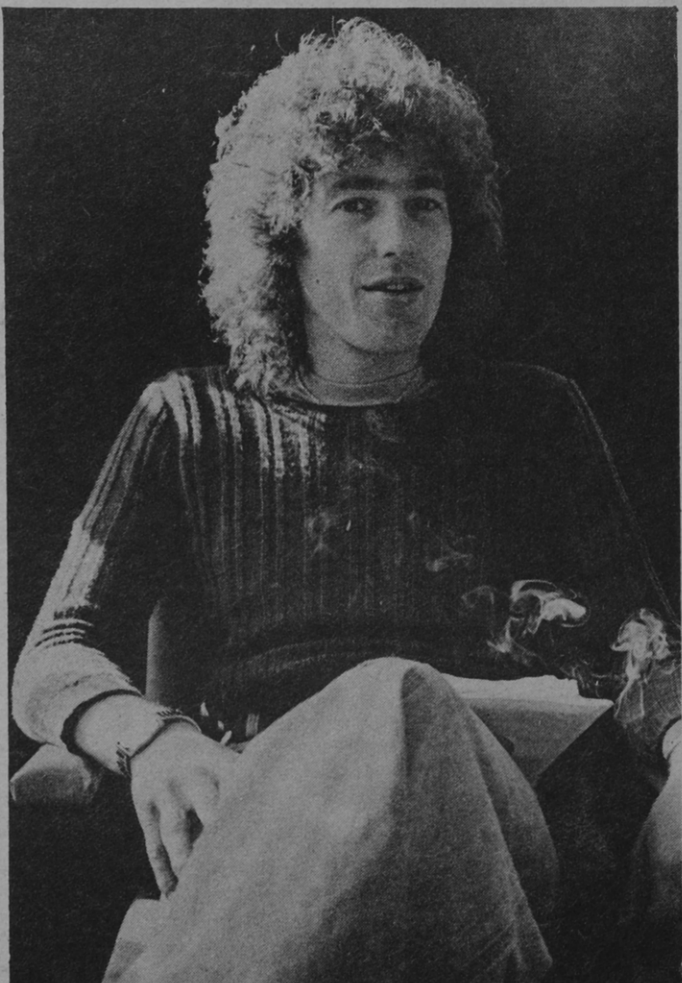
Other acts lined up for the festival are Living Force, Hello Sailor, Country Flyers and Rockinghorse.



## "I Quit" E. JOHN (30)

Elton John announced his retirement from stage performing at a charity concert held in London last month. John had stopped performing late in 1976, but earlier this year he played 5 nights at London's Rainbow Theatre which seemed to signal his return to live performing on a more regular basis. But at last month's London performance John made an announcement part way through the show — "I haven't been touring for a long time. It's been a painful decision for me to come back on the road but this is going to be the last show. There's a lot more to me than playing on the road." He followed this announcement by playing "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me."

However it has been emphasised that this does not mean that Elton John has given up recording; in fact he has a single recorded and ready for release and an album is scheduled for release next year.



JOHN HOOD  
7-midnight  
Sunday - Friday

'putting the  
night-time  
back into  
radio'



Let's hear it  
for summer