



"If you've been in Australia for a while then there's really nothing new at the moment" says Graeme Strachan, Skyhooks' lead singer. In fact, he adds, he was talking to some rock writers there the other day and someone said that the only thing that could liven the Australian music scene would be to have some rock star die. Perhaps a plane crash could be arranged. Even the newer bands aren't really that new, there's always at least one veteran among the members of each new band. And the best known bands? "They've all been around for ages. They're established bands like Skyhooks, Little River Band, Sherbet, AC/DC or whatever."

Skyhooks — Graeme Strachan, Greg Macainsh, Fred Strauks, Bongo Starkie and new boy Bob Spencer — were in Auckland before playing at the Nambassa Festival in late January. The last time they were here, about two years ago, they were opening act to Santana and, that duty performed, they left to spend five months in the States. *Straight in a Gay, Gay World* was recorded at the Record Plant in Los Angeles at that time. The band had also played as opening act for Roxy Music, Joe Cocker and Little Richard and completed a nationwide tour with Uriah Heep — before

returning to Australia to mix the album. They haven't been back to the States since.

Red Symons left the band about a year ago; he's now a musical director for Oz records. Bob Spencer was abducted from Sydney band, Finch, to take his place as guitarist.

A new album, *Guilty Till Proven Insane*, has been recorded in Melbourne and Sydney with an American producer and mixed at LA's Record Plant. It was due to be released in Australia in February.

"We're not quite as staccato now," says Macainsh, "which I think makes it a bit more listenable". Other changes have included an end to the bizarre costuming of their former entity. The audience, too, has changed and the screaming teenyboppers seem to have moved on or, perhaps, grown up with the band.

But how long can they stay in Australia? The contract with Mercury Records in the States has lapsed and getting back there will depend on a new contract with enough advances to make a return tour possible. In the meantime Skyhooks can still draw large audiences in Australia — and there's less chance of their being in a plane crash.

Jeremy Templer.

records

Rough Mix

Pete Townshend & Ronnie Lane
Polydor

As those of you who bought the first Pete Townshend solo album, *Who Came First*, will have a fair idea, this is not a Who album in any sense, and Ronnie Lane fans (probably an equally small number) shouldn't expect a Slim Chance record. Like *Who Came First*, this is to some extent a record for Meher Baba who is Lane and Townshend's spiritual master.

With all those disclaimers out of the way, let it be said that this is a very good record.

It seldom gets up and grabs the listener by the throat, but there are moments of remarkable power in *Rough Mix*. For someone who is so skilful at creating the grand climax with a three-piece rock and roll band, Townshend obviously relishes the chance to use different formats to get his effect. There are three Townshend songs with extensive use of Rabbit Bundrick on organ and piano, and the album's centrepiece, "Street in the City" is backed by a string quartet and a full orchestra.

More than any of Townshend's recent songs about the demise of My Generation, "Street in the City", with its extraordinary backing and image of a window cleaner who refuses to become a suicide for the sake of the narrator's jaded romanticism, has the keenness and energy that made the Who's name.

Lane's contributions on the songwriting side are, not surprisingly, less notable, but his presence ensures that the slight studio sterility of *Who Came First*, which was per-

formed almost totally by Townshend himself, is replaced by the instantaneous feel suggested by the title. Just as a comparison between Townshend's demo tapes and the Who shows what a violent working environment can bring out in the music, *Rough Mix* shows what can be done in a friendly one.

Francis Stark

New Boots and Panties

Ian Dury

Stiff

It's not bleedin' fair.

I mean, we all know what to expect from this fellow who looks like a plumber for the New Wave, records for Stiff Records, and has punk credentials as long as your bon-dage pants. The trouble is, Ian Dury doesn't seem to realise what is supposed to register well on the punkometer. What we have here is an exercise in Cockney Funk.

It takes quite a while to shrug off the disorientating effect of this monstrous hybrid of Albert Steptoe and The Commodores, lurking and leering about the place. I think it's probably worth it. I still can't quite see it as the instant classic that some others can, but it can be great fun while it lasts.

As you might guess from the title, Ian Dury has a taste for the tasteless, which he exploits to good effect on such tracks as "Wake Up And Make Love To Me" and "If I Was With A Woman". As well as this sort of stuff, we should also note the presence of a definite contender for the classics stakes, "Sweet Gene Vincent", which would stand out if only because it is genuine rock and roll, but also has the advantage of being great rock and roll.

Buy and file under 'weird'

Francis Stark

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