

The Scavengers are leaving. Quitting. Splitting. Goodbye, not coming back for a long time. Don't cry for us, Rangitoto.

In a bit over a fortnight, if all goes as planned, they're off to Britain, via the States. Selling their gear will give them their plane fares, plus just enough to buy new equipment when they reach that far-off shore.

Quite a move for such a young band, none of them over 21, and with no previous gigging outside this country.

A big gamble, but one they feel they have to take.

"The scene (i.e.: local New Wave) is now where it was when we started out," says Johnny Volume. "All these boring bands trying to imitate bands like us and the Reptiles, which started the whole thing off here. They're even doing the songs we were doing when we started."

"We were the ones who got beaten up in the street all the time and got all the shit from everybody, and now these guys come along and think they're f***in' great and it's all such a f***in' put-on. It's typical New Zealand... about two years late."

It's the views and attitudes of Godzone that really get the Scavs' backs up.

"You know, Mum would say 'That nice boy Stephen down the road, why don't you go surfing and play rugby like him?'... it's that sort of attitude," says Des.

"In New Zealand the audiences just don't mix like they do in England," says Johnny, "you're either one thing or the other. Most of the punks here are just weekenders."

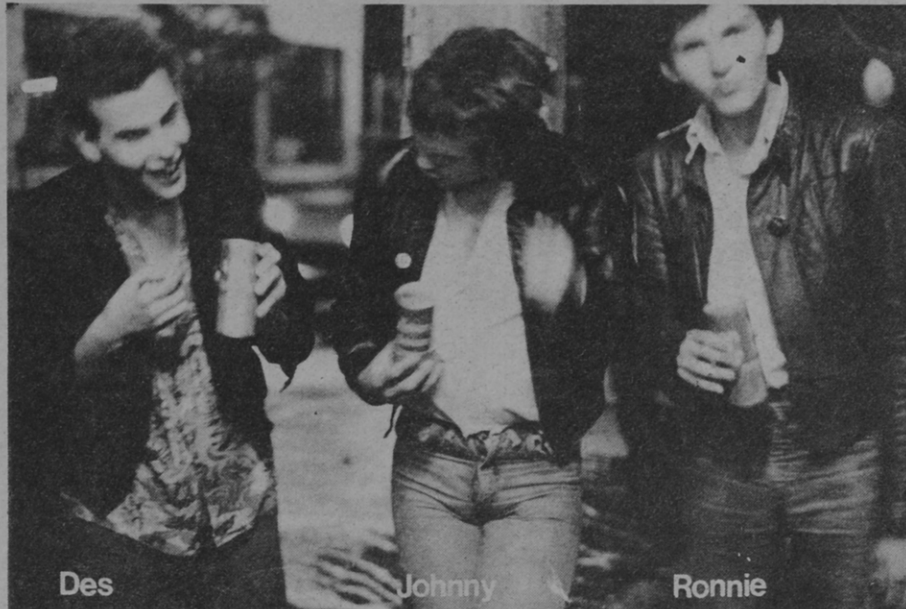
"But it's not so easy for them," interjects Ronnie, the Londoner, "they've got to hold down jobs, they're not in bands, so they can't afford to look or act like that all the time. I mean, everyone likes money, and you've got to support yourself."

The Scavs admit they don't make a fortune, most of their funds being sunk back into the band, but how they survive is something they keep strictly to themselves.

The road has been far from easy for them, since their inception back in 1975, playing New York Dolls and Stones numbers for fellow ATI students.

When it became a fulltime occupation, they were playing halls and dives you wouldn't shoot a sick dog in. Their graduation to the pub scene was full of hassles, too. The audience, says Des, loved them, but the manager kept telling them to turn it down.

"That was a bloody awful night," he re-



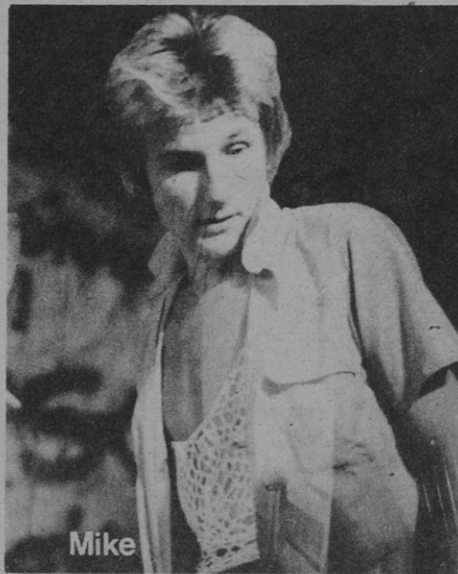
SCAVS leave home

members. "We felt so depressed because we couldn't deliver, the guy was threatening to pull the plug on us, and we played really bad. The next night we said 'stuff it, we'll play the way we want to and to hell with it.'"

"That night he had one of the biggest crowds in there he could ever remember, and they were going mad, jumping up and down and loving it."

Since then, the Scavs have adopted what has become a universal approach for New Wave-type bands: If you don't like us, too bad. They play the way they want to, and now people are listening. A pity they left it so late.

Landing the residency at Zwines was a good break, but by this time, they were having problems with lead singer Mike Lesbian, now departed. The spraycan sign on the wall of Zwines says it all. Once, it said "Mike Lesbian is God." It has now been altered to refer, in rather obscene terms, to



that gentleman as a certain portion of female anatomy.

The band tells stories of vital rehearsals missed, star-tripping, and a general lack of commitment.

"He just walked out," says Ronnie. "He didn't even bother to tell us, just rang our manager and said he was quitting."

"As it is, it could have turned out really bad, but instead it's turned out really good," says Des. "We feel more of a band now."

After a nervous start, Ronnie has now assumed command of the vocals, and the Scavs intend remaining a three-piece. Former plans to take on the singer from Christchurch band the Vandals were shelved when he backed out of an audition.

The loss of Lesbian has meant gains in the song-writing field. There was a stock of original material that now dominates the show, but Lesbian's reluctance to show up for practices meant little or none of it could be performed. It was down to playing punk standards with a minimum of rehearsal and suffering accordingly.

Thankfully, all of this has now changed, and the Scavs are establishing an identity of their own.

And now they're off, hoping to seek their fortune.

"We're just getting so bored with this place," says Johnny. "We're working all the time and making f**k all money, just enough to survive on. We were reading a March copy of NME and it seems what's going on over there is what we're into, so we decided to go."

"Even if we've got nothing, we're just going to go there and start from the bottom, and if we crap out, it doesn't matter. All we're going there for is to have a good time, 'cause we're not having a good time here."

And that's just another sad chapter in the history of New Zealand rock. The country makes the bands and stifles them at the same time. Progress is still impossible, and it means a bunch of creative, talented young guys taking off overseas with no contacts and slim prospects. Anything but stay here and drown in a sea of pavs and quarter-acre sections.

The Women's Institute mentality of this country costs us yet another great band. Catch the Scavs while you've got the chance.

Haere Ra, Johnny, Ronnie and Des.
Duncan Campbell

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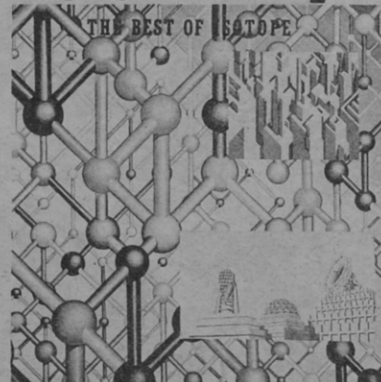
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