



Singles...

This month there are fewer of the out-of-the-way singles which this column is supposed to cater for. Still, there are one or two you can request late at night if you want to impress your local D.J. Now that Kate Bush is on the way to emulating her English success here, it will be interesting to see if the other fluke hit of the year in Britain will catch on.

Althia and Donna's "Up Town Top Ranking" is fairly innocuous reggae as far as I can see, yet it has been selling furiously in the Old Country. The flip side is an introduction to one of the quirks of reggae — the 'dub'. Basically, it is the same backing track with a different mix and most of the vocal removed. The curiosity in this case lies in the fact that of the three writers of "Top Ranking" none are credited on the flip. Not a record for posterity.

A little more likely to last is New York band **Blondie** (the Brigitte Bardot imitator in the band is called Debby Harry, not Blondie). For their latest single, the band have revived a 60's garage band song, "Denise", and turned it into "Denis" complete with authentic \$60 organ sound, and histrionic lapses into fourth-form French, the song can't miss. It's not often you can dance and have a good weep at the same time.

The other real standout in this month's

releases is one you probably won't need to request, because any station worth its salt should have been playing "I Love The Sound Of Breaking Glass" by **Nick Lowe** for weeks. Lowe was the brains behind Brinsley Schwartz and his production credits include *Stick To Me*, both Elvis Costello albums and Ian Dury's *New Boots And Panties*. 'Breaking Glass' rides shamelessly on the riff to Bowie's "Sound and Vision" with a few cute tricks thrown in by the rhythm section of Graham Parker's Rumour. It's simply irresistible.

NZ Singles

I don't know if New Zealanders buy more or less records per head than people in other places, but I get the feeling we don't compare too badly with our peers. Why, then, do so many of those local acts which do get recorded, and find their way onto the market, sell in such abysmally low quantities?

The last month has seen quite a clutch of local 45 releases, and their success is an interesting pointer to the buying habits of the Kiwi consumer. Already a huge seller by local standards, "Tania" by **John Rowles** almost doesn't count because of Rowles' virtually permanent exile, but is still a sign that the country music audience, especially for Maori singers (viz. Tony Williams) is quite prepared to buy New Zealand product. It is quite blatantly a return to "Cheryl Moana Marie" crossed with the schmaltziest of C & W cliches, but it's doing

MUSO'S MEETING

The Auckland branch of the Musician's Union is holding a meeting that should be of particular interest to both amateur and professional musicians working in the rock'n'roll field. The meeting, to be held in the Symphonia Hall, Dominion Rd on Monday July 3 at 5 p.m., aims to identify the current problems facing the musician and to discuss ways to counter these difficulties. The organisers have in mind such aspects as the impact of discos on the live performer and the disorganisation of musicians as a pressure group. If these matters affect you, you are urged to be there.

very nicely.

Golden Harvest, who are, perhaps coincidentally, another Maori act, are living proof of the value of keeping on the move in New Zealand. Their first single, "I Need Your Love" was pushed into the national top ten by non-stop touring, and a willingness to play outside the big cities. The follow-up, also fashionably discoish, "Give A Little Love" stands a fair chance of doing similarly well. It may well be that it is not just helpful, but essential to get out of the big smoke to shift a lot of local records.

When we get to Auckland bands, this seems even more true. **Citizen Band** are currently sitting on the hottest reputation in Auckland, yet their appearances outside the city have been limited to say the least. Their current release, "I Feel Good," whose flip, "My Pohutukawa" is, in my opinion, the best song amongst this whole batch, seems unlikely to scorch up the charts.

In a similar position is **Alastair Riddell**, with quite a local pedigree, but not the kind of single-minded pursuit of airplay, sales and popularity necessary to strike it rich in the 45 market. His "What Good Does It Do Me?" seems already to have disappeared, and it deserves more than oblivion.

Golden Harvest are succeeding in the same way that Mark Williams and Hello Sailor did last year — constant promotion of their own record. As any number of local acts will tell you, if you don't do it yourself,

the record company certainly isn't going to. Perhaps the most likely candidates for their rewards this year are Hamilton band, **Misex**. Currently thrashing around the country pubs, bringing a rather diluted taste of the New Wave to Middle New Zealand, they seem to be getting through the necessary amount of work. Whether their record, "Straight Laddie", a fairly undistinguished Ramones pastiche, is strong enough remains to be seen.

The trouble seems to be that Auckland is the place with a big enough population to support a band indefinitely, where a lot of the recording is done and where enough good bands and musicians congregate to establish some kind of community. At the same time it encourages a touch of elitism by the presence of a greater number of acts of recordable standard. Who could blame all the Wellington bands who have made long-term trips north? Or the Auckland bands who stay at home?

Ultimately, though, it is south of Auckland that local records are made or broken. Only those with enough drive to succeed on the singles market seem prepared to get to those people. Quite understandably, the ambitions of the likes of Citizen Band and Alastair Riddell extend considerably beyond a local hit single, and it seems that Auckland's rock and roll colony is leaving the others to it.

Francis Stark

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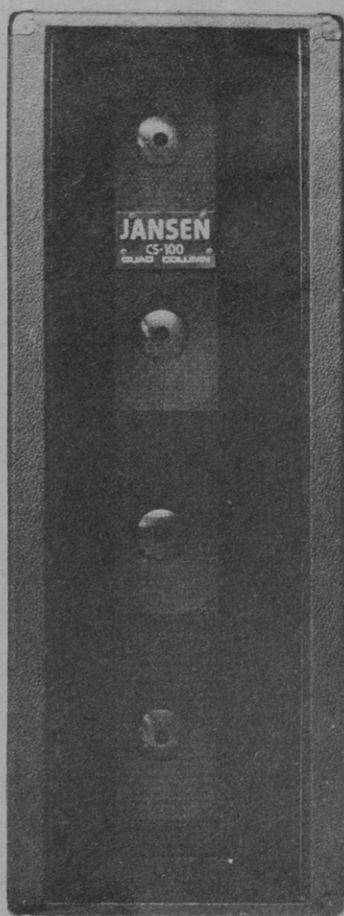
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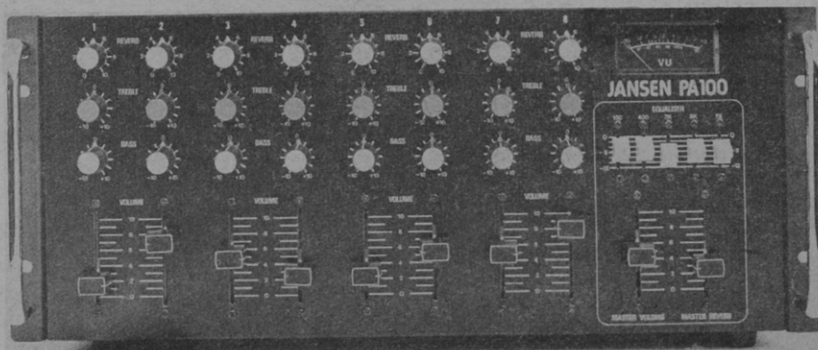
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