

Amid the Sheraton Health Club's homage to clean-edged teutonic fitness Police guitarist Andy Summers is pleasantly crumpled.

His shirt and trousers are baggy and deliberately (fashionably) creased and his brown, dry skin looks weathered, hints at experience. He is, however, a man of not little sophistication.

You're at the end of a long tour — how has that affected the band? Has it reinforced your desire to take a rest from playing together or made you have second thoughts?

"We're definitely having a rest — or sabbatical. You feel like a break anyway — after seven months you start fraying at the edges. You start fraying after two months.

"But this has been a wild tour for us, it's been the most emphatically received of any, in a sense. The album did sell well, especially in the States."

Has playing together changed the new songs much?

"Well, when we came to rehearse these songs we hadn't really played for getting on towards a year, so we had to start from scratch and work it up from there but at this point we're really into the songs, we've gotten them down. These were harder to pull off on stage than some of the other ones, especially as we worked with a sequencer on a couple of songs. I think we're playing as well as we've ever played at the moment, if not better."

And, apart from the three backing singers, you're sticking with the basic three-piece sound.

"Yeah, it's that basic sound but it has changed gradually, with nuances as we go along. We haven't gone off on a tangent at any time, our evolution has always been a natural one. We started off that way and we don't see any need to go off on a tangent."

Do you think the strength of the triangle has been crucial to the band's success?

"It's one of the keys, yeah, but you have to have three strong people. We've always been fairly fierce about keeping it as a three piece. You get more tension out of a three piece, there's the effort of three people trying to make it sound the way it does. The minute you get four or five people the sound changes and you lose that clarity and you start to get a whole middle harmonic that sounds a bit bland."

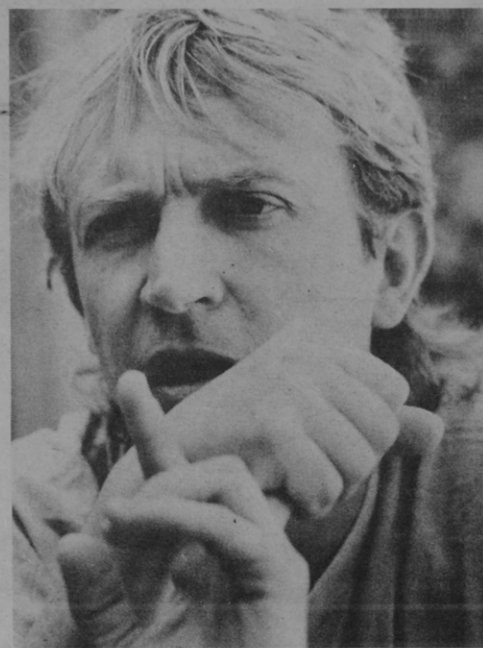
Are you conscious of a need to progress?

"Yeah, but it's more of a feeling thing. You get in there and start playing and you feel like you've done this before, in a sense making a caricature of yourself. You've got to try and be conscious of that. You work on two levels, a conscious and an unconscious, at the same time. You play it then you go out and listen to it and it might not feel right or you might feel you've done that before and try and change it. You have to try and keep the edge in things, that slight uncertainty about where you are. Once you've achieved something you've pinned it down, it's finished."

Can you put your finger on the way Police music is changing?

"It's difficult to say really, because I don't think music should be predictable like that. One of the exciting things, though, is the way technology's changing, with synthesisers and that sort of thing. I think that's going to make music change quite a bit and we're pretty much into that now. I think it's a matter of learning how

ANDY SUMMERS From New York to America.



to take advantage of the new stuff that's coming up and learning how to blend it in with the old.

"We're not going to become a synthesiser-dominated group because it's still essentially a guitar group but we're all getting more into it. I've just got the new Roland thing and I'm particularly looking forward to this year, as we're not playing, to spending time on my own really working with a lot of machines."

"The new thing is midi interface — if you've got that on your instrument you can plug into other instruments. Which means I can work any

keyboard through my guitar, as well as an emulator, a sequencer, a drum machine. Sting and Stewart have some gadgets too so I think by the time we next come together we could have some pretty impressive stuff to link together. And I think you have to do that, you have to kind of force the changes."

With *Synchronicity* you've been written about and recognised not only by, say, *Rolling Stone*, but by magazines like *Time*. Did that acceptance surprise you?

"Well, yes and no. To be written about by a magazine like *Time* means you've really penetrated into the heart of America — it is quite an achievement I suppose. But considering our profile there it's not surprising because Americans do that. They like to institutionalise anybody who becomes very successful and makes a lot of money. They make a religion out of success and money. And, of course, when you are that way it's a matter of course for magazines like *Time* to pick up on you."

Do you enjoy that sort of adulation?

"It has its up side and its down side. It is nice to be treated with all that hoo-ha wherever you go, which happens in America, but of course on the other side you don't have a life of your own. You end up staying in your hotel room. You can't go anywhere without having to sign horrible bits of paper all the time. That kind of wears thin."

Do you live in Britain or America?

"I live in London at the moment but I'm moving to New York in April. I'll probably live in both places though. New York's my favourite place to be."

Many famous people feel more comfortable in America because they can disappear from view and not get bothered.

"In terms of that sort of thing it's probably worse in America than England because English people tend to be more reserved. But what I've found in New York is that you can walk around the streets and people might recognise you but they'll just give you a smile or a nod because they're a lot cooler there. That's a nice feeling — it's when you get out and travel around the interior of America that you really get totally besieged the whole time. People just will not leave you alone. And it really gets a bit of a drag after a while. Not that you don't want to respond to people liking you because of your music but there's something slightly strange about it. The sycophancy gets a bit hard to bear."

So you'll be lowering your profile for a while after this tour?

"Well, none of us are going into hiding. We'll all be going into our separate projects."

The Police seem like workaholics — when you're not with the band you're always doing something else.

"Yeah, I think we are. Fortunately or unfortunately I think we're all driven. I try to think maybe I should go and sit on the beach for a couple of months ... but I think work is what it's all about. The main thing for me is to do work that progresses you as a musician or a person, work with the people you want to and take your breaks when you want them. I don't think I could just go and sit on a lily pad for a couple of years."

What do you have lined up yourself? Another project like the Fripp album?

"Yes, I'm doing another album with Robert Fripp, actually. We meet on March 19 to do the album and then I'm going to be in a movie which

I'm also performing the music for."

What's the movie about?

"It's a sort of thriller. It's about a young girl who goes to live in the city and what happens to her. I play this guy she gets involved with. There are a number of murders."

Are you interested in directing eventually?

"Maybe eventually, but at the moment it's a new world to me. I'd be more interested in making my own 16mm films at first — or videos, I've got a video camera now. But my main interest is in acting and doing film scores at the moment."

How's your photography going?

"Well, I'd like to do another book eventually but it's a very time-consuming thing, you can only do so much."

So you see your photography in terms of work rather than a hobby.

"Yeah — but I love it, it's not work in the sense of a job but it's a lot more than a hobby. It takes space, time and commitment to really pull off anything worthwhile."

Are there any other musicians you want to work with?

"The only other one I'm considering is a black jazz drummer called Jack du Genet, who plays on all the ECM albums. We've been talking about doing an album for ages. I'll also probably do a solo album, with songs, etcetera ..."

Songs rather than instrumental pieces?

"Yeah. Because I've done the instrumental thing, which I loved, but now I'd like to do more of a straightahead album."

Are you writing lyrics at the moment?

"No, but I've quite a backlog."

What about the others — have they got musical projects?

"I would think that Sting will probably do an album on his own this year and I think Stewart's doing another film soundtrack soon (Copeland did the soundtrack for Francis Ford Coppola's just-released *Rumblefish*). I think during the year more will surface."

Has this tour been videotaped?

"Yeah. We already have a live one hour concert show which is being shown in America at present."

A live album seems a logical step.

"That's the next project for the band. We're now talking about going into the studio in December to put the live album together. It'll contain material from all the tours, going right back."


With *Ghost in the Machine* you introduced the philosophical works of Arthur Koestler and on *Synchronicity* dealt with some very dark, painful emotions. Do you find it ironic that pictures of the Police still appear on schoolgirls' walls?

"I do, yeah. But it's very nice in the sense that we play concerts and people are singing all the lyrics to 'King of Pain', rather than some of the more simplistic lyrics which have dominated rock music for years. It's a sort of upward trend. I think if one can achieve anything like that it's something ..."

Do people take it in?

"Well, I think a lot of kids in America learned what *Synchronicity* meant for the first time. And if it sparks their interest in things like that it's much better than telling them to go out and knife somebody ... or that sort of shouting in a bucket about changing systems or the right to work and all that stuff from a few years back. That was a lot of rhetoric really."

Russell Brown



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