



OMD: Andrew McCluskey (foreground) and Paul Humphreys (extreme right).

HOLIDAYS IN THE SUN

OMD's PAUL HUMPHREYS ON LINE

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark in an Aussie pub? Yep — quite a few Aussie pubs, actually. Paul Humphreys' thin voice tells the strain of a rigorous Australian tour.

"I've just been lazing around

this morning," he says from his Perth hotel. "It's so nice to get some time off."

Humphreys and fellow OMD (as they prefer to be known now) founder Andy McCluskey have brought on tour their regulars

Malcolm Holmes (drums) and Martin Cooper (keyboards, saxophone) and additional sidemen Graham and Neil Weir (trumpet and trombone respectively, as well as sundry other instruments). It's interesting that they've chosen to extend the band rather than take the easy way out and reproduce the sounds with the aid of the powerful Fairlight computer.

"We could have used the Fairlight," Humphreys agrees. "But for

live performance it's better to have the people there I think. Otherwise it's a bit like some sort of divine intervention when this trumpet or whatever comes through the PA with no apparent source. That's the reason why we have a drummer too — it's much better for people to be able to see a drummer pounding away than just hearing the rhythms."

"Real" instruments were also used on OMD's most recent album, *Junk Culture*, something others are now shying away of for the sake of convenience.

"We did originally do the horn parts for the album on the Fairlight and other things but it just didn't sound right so we brought in a brass section for songs like 'Locomotion'."

The group's first four albums were made in their own studio in Liverpool, but for *Junk Culture* they flew thousands of miles to the sunny Caribbean to record at Monserrat — the place where the stars like Elton John and the Police go to lay down their masterworks. Humphreys explains:

"We felt we just had to get out of Liverpool, to get another perspective on things, get out into the

world. I think there was only so much we could get out of one room in Liverpool — four albums was enough.

"Monserrat was great in the sense that it was like a holiday, it was exciting. In Liverpool it had become like going to the office in the morning and it shouldn't be like that. Having Brian Trench as producer was a big help too. He's only a couple of years older than us and he went out with us, became like one of the band.

"The only problem was that because we weren't in our own studio we were paying studio rates. *Junk Culture* nearly broke the bank but it was worth it."

Indeed — after the dismal failure of its predecessor, *Dazzle Ships*, *Junk Culture* and the single 'Locomotion' both went Top 10 in England. At least part of the album's appeal has to be attributed to its rhythmic assertiveness. Were the songs built from the rhythms up?

"Yeah — that's the way we like to work, get the rhythm tracks right and then build on top of them. A lot of people seem to feel they have to begin with the melody and I think that limits them. There's not a lot you can put under a certain melody once you've settled on it."

Would you agree that melody plays a less significant role on this album than on some previous ones?

"Oh... I don't know about that. It's certainly more melodic than *Dazzle Ships*."

There also seem to be a few cues taken from black dance music.

"Yes, that's probably because of the time Andy and I spent in America. I think that's another example of the way getting out of Liverpool exposed us to new ideas."

Black music seems to be setting the pace in the use of synthesiser technology now — a reversal of the situation a few years ago.

"Yeah, definitely. A lot of those New York dance records are almost totally synthesisers."

There seems to be a pretty care-free spirit linking some of the lyrics in *Junk Culture*. 'Apollo', in particular, seems to set the tone for the album with its opening lines of:

*Let's move, let's shake
Let's bleed, let's fake
Let's go for broke
Let's make mistakes*

"I think the lyrics reflect the way we approached the album. It was a sort of reaction to *Dazzle Ships*, where we dealt with a lot of heavy political themes. On that album we did that because we'd been criticised for our lack of political content and we wanted to show that we did think about those things. But this time we wanted to have a bit more fun."

The song 'Tesla Girls' — the name of Nikolai Tesla (the developer of AC power and a number of other potentially brilliant inventions that were bypassed by society) seems an odd one to evoke in a pop song.

"Well I already knew a little bit

about Tesla because I'd studied electronics for a couple of years and then we saw a documentary about him on TV. But the song's not really about him so much as the way he's affected people. It's about all the girls in the world who use the things that he made possible — hairdryers, TV sets and everything — without ever being aware of who or what he was."

Hmmmm.

Current press material has dwelt on the aspect of this being the new, fun OMD and Humphreys agrees that attitudes within the group have changed quite markedly. Although 2-3000 capacity pubs are a rather strange experience he says he's enjoying playing the new songs live.

"The new songs do work well live. It's interesting — I think the way we went about this album has made it sound for the first time as if it's a band playing on the record. At times it sounds like we've just gone in and put down the tracks live."

It's just as well the band is enjoying playing because there's an awful lot of gigging coming up, in both Europe and America, in the next year. What about plans for the next recording?

"Oh there's nothing firm at present," Humphreys murmurs somewhat absently. "And to tell the truth I don't really mind too much."

Steve Spencer

Letters

Post to 'RIU' Letters, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1.

Axeman In Mock Shock

I would appreciate it if you would tell whoever is responsible for writing the captions for the photos of the Mockers on tour (July RIU) that the Axemen have never tuned their guitars like that and that's a damned cheap joke not much appreciated. Pioneering our own style of music is hard enough without powerful media put-downs like that crap! You guys have got a tremendous responsibility printing information that some people take for granted as the truth! Yup — hard to believe it, but there are still people who believe in the press! So if you don't want to get involved with Randolph Hearstian controversies, clean your act up, huh? Stuart Page (for the Axemen) Christchurch

The writer concerned, Alister 'Make 'Em Laff' Cain, has been firmly chastised and has voluntarily agreed to undertake no humour for at least a month.RB

No Changing Spots...

Phew! Where did Andrew Fagan get his groovy leopard-skin jeans from? That man has style. Not A Schoolgirl Mt Eden

Great to see a NZ band getting front-page coverage again. And may I be the first to say that I think Andrew Fagan looks wild in those leopardskin pants. Fair makes my palms sweat. Breathless Epsom

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