

'DIREEN' FROM PAGE 36
here' and maybe by the end of it 'what am I doing here?'

Many people, for whatever reason, feel obliged to draw a dividing line between rock music and other forms of performance but you obviously don't.

"No, I think it's mainly a matter of exposure for those other forms of performance. The more we perform with me playing acoustic songs or the Full Moon group performing farces, clowning and things like that, the sharper people's critical faculties will become and the greater their vocabulary of criticism and understanding of another form of performing art. Which I think is essential because rock music has painted itself into a corner."

We've spoken a lot about what rock music hasn't got going for it — what *has* it got going for it?

"It still has the power to change people's lives — and not necessarily work for the better but it can jolt them to that extraordinary space of mind where you are learning, where you are experiencing new things, where you can be like a new person. This is getting a bit ethereal but in that frame of mind you can come closer to a feeling of creativity in ourselves. And I think now creativity is very important, for people to either do it or experience other people doing it."

"Sometimes I Get So Lonely, I Just Put My Head In A Book

The publishing side of Full Moon (and, before

that, Prototype) isn't exactly high profile. But books by people who have been associated with the collectives have been available for some years. They are available at all the university bookshops but Direen admits that, in the absence of a true indie distribution network in the manner of records, there is a problem with outlets. So what about record shops?

"I don't think we should put them in record shops but that people who go into record shops should start going into bookshops — as a hell of a lot of them do anyway."

Flying Nun boss Roger Shepherd told of an excursion to Lancaster Park for a rugby test with Bill Direen. Direen loudly abusing the "neutral" Gallic referee — in colourful French.

A Reach As Long As Your Arms ...

Bill Direen has been described as a "one man concept" and you do seem to have kept everything you do well within your reach.

"I suppose that's true — it brings up the matter of control and how much power is involved in it all. The mediaeval farces are relevant because they're also related to this element of having things within reach, not unreclaimable, not getting out of your hands. They are very much akin to the mediaeval craftsman's products because the price charged for a craftsman's work couldn't possibly relate to the amount of time he put into it, the thought, the care and the actual manufacturing of the product ... which in many cases didn't correspond with the idea or concept but was nonetheless a valid representation of

quite a personal search for expression."

In terms of the control thing — in the eyes of the public at least, every band you've been involved with is Bill Direen's band. How do you feel about that?

"Well, I think that's true — for the first reason that the material has been 99 per cent written by me. The material is written by me, I have ideas about how I want it put across, so that impression is correct. But by the same token, in fairness to the people who play it, part of the excitement of the record is those people playing on it and musicianship is just as important a thing as songwriting."

Direen's dominance must also relate to his personality. I can recall watching the first Soluble Fish practice and almost all the drive and direction came from him. Ego certainly, but also the actions of a prime mover. Is that the role of an artist today, motivator?

"I suppose with people having more leisure time it is necessary for there to be people who are prime movers. What Carol, Julie and I are doing at the core of the Full Moon thing — realisation of what people can do, letting them get satisfaction out of it. Yeah, I suppose that is a part of creative work that there be people who develop other people. It's like developing a photograph, the skills and everything are there already."

It seems ironic that someone with Direen's creative drive and desire to influence people for the better should shy away from paths that would

place him before a greater audience. And a man who wrote a pop song like 'Bedrock Bay' certainly *could* reach many people. But then his logic would be that he will be more effective as his own boss, reaching those who are interested, and that's true. Sometimes his logic will also be skewed — he's undeniably eccentric, frustrating. But eccentricity is only the obverse of individuality.

"A lot of people who come in to work with us at the theatre, when we talk about money they say 'oh, I'll be able to get that on top of the dole', as if the dole was a cheat, because they're made to think that it *is* a cheat, that they are bludging and so on and therefore on the wrong side. But people have got to come around to the idea that they've got to get *off* the dole and they've got to make up that money somehow, and to *declare* it for God's sake. Say 'I've earned this much'. And as they gradually earn more and more they'll feel better and better and start doing better and better things."

"Okay, that's for the few who are able to work in a group like ours. But there are other groups people can get into — like doing their sport for spectacle — I don't know how many unemployed table tennis players there are, but that sort of thing. I really want that to get across because I think it's a terrible situation as far as creativity and our country's art goes that people are just stifling themselves with the feeling that they are useless and *not allowed* to express themselves in any way for any return. And that's *not right*"
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