



The Rip get their heads together (L-R): Alastair, Robbie, Geoff.

Ripping Yarns

There are certain mistakes a young band can make when they start out — and singer-guitarist Alastair Galbraith admits the Rip made most of them.

Up until the beginning of this year the Rip had been typecast as Dunedin's perennial support band and no one seemed to consider them anything more.

"We'd never been assertive enough in saying that we shouldn't have to play supports so we just kept on playing them," he explains. "Also we never had any money as a band because all the money we earned from all the supports went straight back into our individual

pockets because our drummer had a wife and kids and needed it just to keep going. Consequently we never had any money to buy good gear — we could never get bands to support us because we'd be using their gear. And also we never thought we were good enough."

But things began to look up and former Bored Games drummer Jeff Harford came into the group and was able to devote more time to the songs than the band's previous drummer. Confidence within the band also began to rise.

"We know ourselves now that we're good and we deserve to keep on going. We've got more of an idea of where we stand compared to other bands," Galbraith explains. He

does bristle when suggestions that the Rip have taken some cues from other bands like the Verlaines are mentioned, pointing out that 25 of the Rip's 30 songs were written "before I even liked the Verlaines".

The only Dunedin band he'll own up to being influenced by is the Clean — "I didn't even know the difference between the Verlaines and the Chills and so on until half way through last year."

So obviously the Rip haven't, as he puts it, "known the right people" and their rise since their first chaotic pub gig in February of 1982 ("we very nearly resolved never to do anything again after that") hasn't exactly been meteoric. Has the slow struggle helped Galbraith and fellow original member bassist Robbie Muir?

"Yeah, I think it has. In a situation where you might be playing to a new audience and they hate you, it might put off a lot of bands who've been all the way pushed or encouraged by someone else and when that someone else isn't there they fall flat. And we've never had anyone there to say that we were good, no one has told us we're good until this year. But it's exactly the same songs."

It seemed earlier this year as if it might be some old story when plans for the Rip to tour nationally with the Verlaines were cancelled (not by the Verlaines) after Harford had already taken leave from work to tour. But the time was put to good use with a trip up to Christchurch with Terry Moore where the band's debut EP *A Timeless Piece* was recorded.

The EP's title comes from a line in the song 'Holy Room'. The "holy room" was the Rip's practice room, which served on other days as a church and a gymnasium. The "timeless piece" is the handless clock that hung on the wall there. The record will be out soon, self-released but distributed through Flying Nun.

So the Rip at last have some respect and a record and they'll be looking to tour sometime. And then there's the reported vow to never play another support gig ...

"We say we won't ever do sup-

ports again but what we mean is we won't support bands who we don't think are really good. We like bands with good lyrics. I think lyrics are maybe the most important thing."

Russell Brown

Ascent of the Ape

It was during the year in Timaru that I first met the TV Eyepeople.

Despite the years, my memories of them are vivid — I wonder sometimes if time has retouched the colours. Patrick Faigan was slight, bespectacled, yet intense. Many of the locals found it difficult, if not impossible, to carry on a conversation stretching more than a few syllables with him yet I had glimpsed the wildly enthusiastic talker that lay behind the prescription lenses. Kevin Smith was tall and strongly built, with more than a hint of Tongan flowing through his veins. It was not uncommon for women to be attracted to him but even at that young age he had pledged his troth and remained steadfastly chaste. It seems strange now to think that he was later to be married at the same basilica we used to watch, sometimes for an entire Sunday, from the terrace of our bungalow. Echoes flood back of the friendly policeman who came to ask if the bands in the back yard could please finish before five o'clock Mass.

The third of the Teev triumvirate I knew least well was Steven Watson, who had travelled to Invercargill to study accountancy and would only return to Timaru when the band — then the Picnic Boys — had one of its intensive recording periods with the four-track cassette machine they collectively owned. He would always be pleasant but sometimes I thought the interminable travel this mysterious man was obliged to undertake gave him too much time to think. But the nights spent sipping



'Deebie' (a very sweet liquid brewed by the natives) and talking of the sunset could not last and soon the Riviera of the South was but a memory for us all.

After his marriage ceremony Smith moved to Nelson to devote time to his twin passions, awesomely sensitive creative output and playing rugby football. Faigan took up a Baudelairean existence above a fruit shop in Christchurch and Watson, ever the rock, continued to delve into the mysteries of double entry book-keeping in Invercargill.

I still correspond with them occasionally and actually ran into Smith at the All Blacks v France test match in Christchurch. As the gentle nubian giant effortlessly plucked me from the gutter into which I had fallen I suggested that perhaps, with eight TV Eye tapes behind them, as either the Picnic Boys or their subsequent mutation, Say Yes To Apes, and two vinyl LPs and two new EPs, it was perhaps time for me to furnish my editors with an interview. Unfortunately, time was not our *amigo* and it was resolved to conduct a postal interview.

Letters duly arrived from Smith and Faigan. The eccentric Watson, however, claimed he was unable to participate, his head having recently fallen off.

I opened Faigan's letter first, slicing open the crumpled brown envelope and reopening the scar I had earned in an unfortunate

brawl at the notorious bar "Gladstone's" in the South.

His rabid prose gave answer to my first request, for an explanation of what TV Eye was: "Nationwide network of psychic desperadoes? Full frontal assault on the reality asylum or just another rock 'n' roll circus? To me it represents exploration, communication, confrontation, voodoo sex magic, the awareness of centuries, oh yeah, oh yea, oh no — a probe into inner and outer space, an invasion of the memory banks, 'laughing in the face of death and failure', the autumn of paranoia that stalks in the wake of the Summer Of Love." Sometimes I worry about his reading.

Smith described his function in the group and that of the others: "My function is solely to deliver the goods expected from one third of the group. Sometimes my input is an idea or rather the seed of an idea and sometimes it is to fertilise an idea. I suppose that's all any of us can do. Pat's function or rather major contribution is to constantly monitor motives, ideals and processes and Steve's is to constantly explore the state of the art and rationalise things — the guardian of the technology. I am uncertain about mine. Obviously musically I endeavour like the rest of the band to play to the very limit of my ability (and often beyond)." Smith sings and plays guitar, Faigan drums and Watson plays bass guitar. Usually.

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Purple Girls

It's a fault of the music scene that the roles assigned to women often tend to be those of band member's girlfriend, door person, etc, or, if they do take the stage, singer/keyboard player/visual showpiece. Bands composed entirely of women are usually only to be found the other side of the sign that reads:

Women's Music

Look Blue Go Purple are a little different. They fit their five pieces

in alongside other Dunedin bands with barely a second glance, even though they made a deliberate choice to form an all-woman band back in February last year. Which isn't to say they don't sound quite different, both tangibly and intangibly to most other groups. For a start, there's volume ...

"Men play so loud," says bass player Kathy Bull, grinning but meaning it. "It's amazing — we share our practice rooms with bits of other bands and you can't just plug in and go because it's so loud. I like playing loud bass but what I call loud bass not many other people would call loud bass."

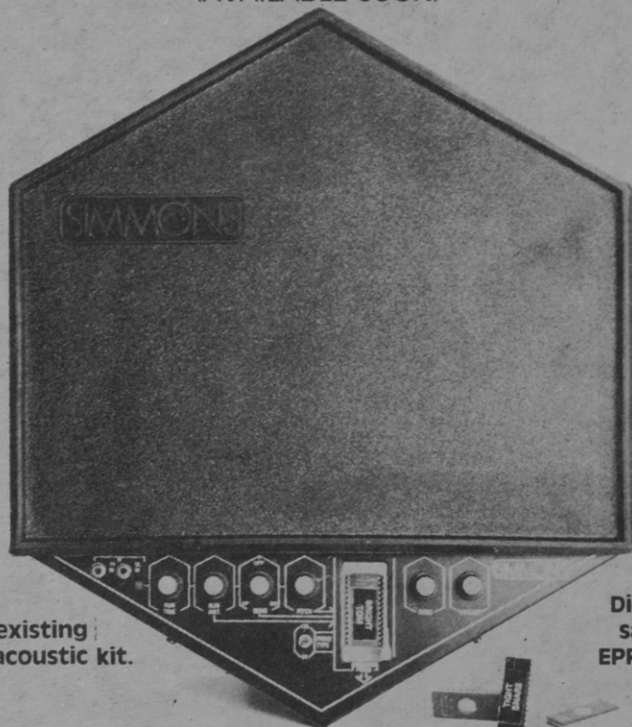
"I think it's better not to be too

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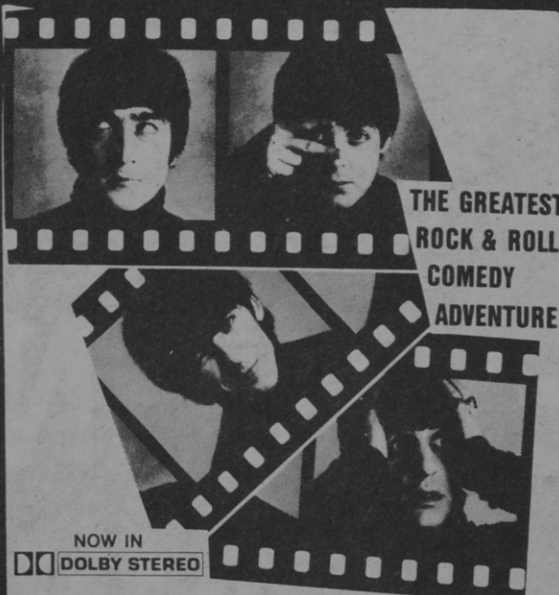
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