



No matter what Norm Jones would have you believe, the rioters weren't all gang members and street kids — here a couple of sportily clad young men play their part in the demolition of the Information Centre.

'RIOT' FROM PAGE 2

And it was. While alcohol was undoubtedly a major factor in what happened, this wasn't the drunken, surly violence that sometimes crops up at such events. Violence was directed only at riot police and nearby buildings and the mood among onlookers from the square side seemed more one of bemusement and interest than fear. I walked up among those doing the damage and the mood seemed to be one of "you gave us riot police — we give you a riot."

The moments of fear came on the two occasions when the police charged the crowd — several people fell.

Meanwhile the destruction of the city Information Centre and the 6 metre windows of the empty-since-it-was-built ground floor of the DFC building was almost methodical. There was a weird sense of purpose among the cross-section of young people doing the damage. More stood back and cheered.

The second police charge convinced me that this was no place to stand and observe proceedings, so I returned to the RLU office. To get a ride away from it all, I would have to accompany the driver back past the disturbances and up Wakefield St. By this

time the police had created a kind of buffer zone at Wellesley St. Shopowners below Wellesley St peered nervously out through closed, but still intact, doors. They would catch damage and looting an hour or so later, when police drove rioters the length of Queen St, shouting "Move down! Move down!"

We took the back way up to the car, through demolition sites which had an unearthly feel, with groups of people wandering up from the square to nowhere in particular. When we struck Wakefield St the really sad, senseless part of the rioting had begun — youths ran out of a smashed up little lunchbar, cackling with glee at having been able to heist a carton of cigarettes or a couple of cans of drink. It was definitely time to leave.

Later, a sports shop would be broken into and several rifles stolen — something the *Auckland Star* made much of, even though guns in such stores are mechanically disarmed as a matter of course.

The next day Queen St was quiet and clean, although still a little shell-shocked. Glaziers' vans dotted the footpath and new windows went up — Centrepont Fabrics even had neat letters reading 'Riot Sale' on their new

Concerts & Commerce Inner City Priorities

The Aotea Square riot and accompanying media attention will only serve to further alienate youth from society, according to record retailer and member of the Queen St Retailers' Association, Michael Dow, who witnessed events from atop a city building.

"In less than a week we've had a media hype about trouble at the Deep Purple concert, where the only problems actually occurred outside the concert and now this," he said. "The media is turning public feeling against youth and music — which is just rubbish."

While the actions of the rioters could in no way be excused, he said the police must take some of the blame, for assembling in riot gear behind a largely peaceful crowd and for stopping the concert.

"The focal point was obviously on the stage and when the music stopped the people turned around and saw all these riot police with helmets and batons right behind them. And too many young people have seen things like *Straw Dogs* and it exploded."

"We talked to some of the kids later and they said under normal circumstances it would have been alright but seeing these guys in helmets they said they'd never felt that way before, they just went mad."

While he said that "in general the police looked after themselves very well,

glass.

The whole sorry incident could have been avoided in one way by, as has been suggested, the banning of alcohol at the concert. But to many who were there the disorder would not have escalated if police conduct had been sensitive and appropriate to the overwhelmingly peaceful mood of the concert. Coming up the middle of

obviously their resources weren't that strong — the guys on the beat were great," the decision to split the mob and drive it the length of Queen St, where shops were devastated obviously hadn't been in the interests of retailers.

"I'm concerned about the repercussions both as a retailer and as a lover of Auckland," Mr Dow said. He said he would be meeting with Triple M representatives to try and establish a different kind of link with the city's young people and try and stop something similar happening again.

"The city fathers don't understand youth — most of them are geriatrics. Some, like Cath Tizard, are doing all they can but there's not really much communication. There's a big gap between young people and the police too."

Mr Dow said the most useful thing Queen St retailers could do to prevent similar incidents would be to each contribute \$200 towards the setting up of some kind of "not so bureaucratic" means of communication with young people.

"The solution is not to continue depriving people of their rights," he said. "It's not different from a business problem — you identify the problems, find the causes and then come up with solutions. We can't afford to go the other way and risk teenagers being virtually banned from the inner city."

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Queen St and assembling across the main exit from the square was akin to setting themselves up as pins in a bowling alley. Some of the crowd simply took up the challenge.

The actions of the rioters were unquestionably selfish — but then the last half dozen years have been increasingly selfish times.

Russell Brown

Makeshift implements of destruction came from everywhere. Here a man uses the top of a rubbish bin to attack a van owned by Spaceworld.



Summer Tours Threatened? Spandau Ballet, Neil Young, Culture Club

At press time the Auckland City Council had still made no decision on a suggestion that rock concerts be banned from all council-owned venues — that includes Western Springs and Mt Smart Stadium. Concerts which stand to be affected by any such measure are Neil Young (Western Springs, Feb), Spandau Ballet (Springs, March) and Culture Club (Springs, March-April).

It would be criminal if concerts were banned from Western Springs, a venue that has contained crowds from 40,000 to 60,000 with no significant trouble. Why punish concert-goers when the recent trouble at the Deep Purple show was outside the gig, not inside? (Incidentally, the council's Parks Dept. receives about \$40,000 in rent for each of the big concerts.)

At present it seems reasonably likely that other action such as strict policing of alcohol bans will be implemented in preference to such draconian measures but the best way to make sure of seeing the above acts is to drop mayor Cath Tizard a line, c/- Auckland City Council, Private Bag, Auckland, telling her how much you want to see the concerts and why she should let them go ahead. Do it!

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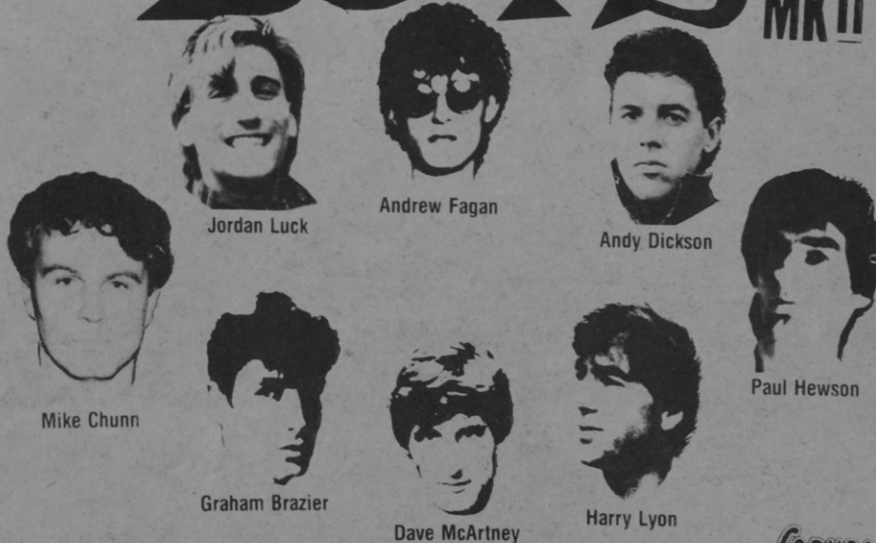
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