

Firstly, I think I should explain about Consideration Jones.

Consideration Jones is a small, black, wooden hoodoo charm; expansive of lip and decorated in bold pink, orange, yellow and green fluorescent, a kind of goliwog for the nuclear age. He has diamantes for eyes and dangles around my neck on a chain of tiny, colourful beads.

I found him hanging on my bedroom wall a while back. He'd been left there by the girlfriend of the room's previous occupant, apparently with the specific aim of offering up a hex on any other woman who dared to darken his pillowcase until he could join her in Europe. When he moved his stuff out he wasn't even gonna touch it.

I wasn't too sure about a hex that would banish women from my life either, but Consideration had a curious appeal about his flared features and I took him on an outing or two. His behaviour was exemplary; his diamantes twinkling weirdly under the coloured lights of the night scene. It happened that one morning he was with me ...

Your Mission, Should You Choose ...

It was disorientating, it couldn't help but be so. Mondays meant the beginning of a week's work, you learned to accept that and here we were, on a Monday morning, realising I'd be catching the train out of town that night. The content of the working week had been reasonably clear, like rough sketches in five cartoon panels, to be filled out and coloured in with the minor variations each day brought. Now here I was going out on the road with Australian sinewists Hunters and Collectors ...

Flying High

Monday, March 5  
I boarded the Northerner some 20 minutes early, just to give myself a chance to sit still and contemplate my situation. Of course before I'd made much progress the wheels of steel began to roll and the situation had changed again ...

I was hunched over a beer cursing the damn breweries for putting swill like this on the shelves just because there was a strike on as we rumbled into Hamilton, which was where I'd leave the mainline of human travel for the night.

See, around that time of year the modern-day hipster's equivalent of

Collection • Consideration • Confusion  
Six Days on the Road with Hunters and Collectors by Russell Brown

jumping the southbound freight is finding a spare seat with one of the tours that knit a purl 'round the country's seats of tertiary education.

Orientation, they call it, but for some it's like a skip off the edge into a kind of pleasing disorientation. I was to meet the Zippy's Last Tour crowd for a lift thru to my destination, Palmerston North. First, of course, there was a night of music.

I arrived too late for the Able Tasmans' farfisa beat but in time for Look Blue Go Purple who are the kind of band which makes being a "rock reporter" meaningful. Sidestepping, swerving round and occasionally falling flat on their faces over technical hitches, they played another set of bewilderingly varied, spirited and idiosyncratic songs. Five women you should bloody well listen to.

Those masters of pop spirituality, the Chills, weren't on top form when they closed the night but the bedlam down the front of the stage drew out the best version of 'Doledrums' I'd heard them play and an absolutely scorching 'Silhouette'. People sat around the sides of the stage and the band sweated. Wow.

Stuck and Starved

Tuesday, March 6  
It was with mixed feelings that I watched the van shrink into the distance. Within it were the only sure friends within a couple of hundred kilometres and here was I, on the edge of a town where Consideration and I knew only each other. On the other hand was the bracing breeze of free agenthood. It was 8am in Palmerston North as I turned and began walking towards the centre of town ... three hours and considerably more walking later, disorientation was again beginning to waft around my head like petrol fumes. The motel where I'd arranged to meet the Hunters and Collectors tour party gave me the address of another place, where the receptionist disclaimed all knowledge of any band staying at her motel.

My bag was beginning to feel as if it was full of wet black sand and I decided to head for the sanctuary of a bar. So there I was at 11.05am, sitting barefoot in the Commercial Hotel public bar, resting my elbows on a tabletop video game. At the table next to me a woman in her 50s gurgled and spluttered through the reservoir of mucus in her lungs, occasionally putting a blotched hand to her mouth and loudly hawking up into a tissue. She drank gin and tonics and smoked menthol

cigarettes. I wondered what I was doing on the planet.

To make it worse, that contrary organ, the writer's brain, was beginning to kick and wriggle for a change and all I had was a ballpoint and a couple of scraps of newsprint. No typewriter. As Boring Old Bill Burroughs once remarked, the first step to becoming a writer is simply learning how to type. And here I was, itching to whip up an Olivetti Bolognese while the old Lettera 32 was half an island away ...

... after walking the length of the Waikato Uni campus, sighting the big tour truck was, to say the least, a relief. None of the half dozen students I'd picked out of the throng to ask directions had been able to give me clear directions on how to find their own social hall.

Inside the hall, the crew was standing around talking about loading in the PA and lights. Doing the most talking (not an unusual situation, as I was to discover) was Aussie lights person Gary Senior. The slim, laconic denim jacket wearer looks like a better looking, less healthy Andrew Fagan and periodically comes up with streams of nonsense so effortlessly deadpan

it won't take long ... or maybe we could set up the desk on one of those beams up there and I could do it up there, yeah ... no, let's fly the whole stage ... we could do the whole gig upside down, yeah ...

The load in eventually began and the PA stacks were built up on each side. Paul Crowther put the PA through its paces with waves of white noise. Hunters and Collectors arrived with tour promoter, soundman and maternal figure to any number of local musicians, Doug Hood, and began to soundcheck.

Oh, the soundcheck ... ever heard 'Whole Lotta Love' with horns and without guitar? Drummer Doug Falconer wailed it. When Mark Seymour came up and plugged in there was even a version of the song every bozo yelled out for on the tour, 'Talking to a Stranger'. "You horrible little man ..." glared and grinned Mark as John Archer jumped loudly in a couple of verses through with that bassline. Meanwhile, the support band, Working With Walt, sat and waited nervously for their turn ...

... the cricket was going from bad to worse as I sat, surrounded by student barpeople in Orientation t-shirts, in front of the colour TV out back of the bar.

"Ever done lights?" said Doug, sitting down in the next chair. "Wanna do 'em for Working With Walt?"

For the band with the nasty song about Rip It Up? Sure! The whole

the all-new Working With Walt lineup shows a lot of promise and the way they fed off crowd enthusiasm was heartwarming. 'Rip It Up' the song, however, was pretty disappointing — not very venomous at all.

With our cricket team plunging into oblivion, all attention could safely be diverted towards the new Hunters and Collectors. A rock 'n' roll band! Precise, muscular R&B with a suntan. Physically fit music. The performance, as it transpired, was the least impressive of the North Island leg of the tour.

Afterwards it was chats to a couple of Working With Walts (the guitarist was one of the people who were quite taken by Consideration; "spooky," he said) and staying outta the way of the crew.

I was to travel back to Wellington with the band and took my seat in the minibus. Mark poked his head in the door and scowled at his fellow band members: "Somebody keeps drinking half their cans of beer and leaving them," he said, waving a Fosters can. "Don't do it, because it's a bloody waste of beer!"

I fell asleep briefly on the trip and awoke to find a full-scale singalong in progress, with Mark as head choirboy. From Tom Jones to Shocking Blue, they all got the six-part harmony treatment. Doug remembered Mark's old band the Jetsons doing 'Venus' and we recalled the chaos that used to go with

Falconer, trumpeter Jack Howard and flugelhornist Jeremy Smith were gearing up for a round of golf at the Hutt course.

"Look, there's no point in me putting a slab on the longest drive because I'll lose," said Jeremy. "Make it closest to the pin."

A "slab" is two dozen cans of beer — just one of the beer drinkin' references to be found on *The Jaws Of Life*. Now you know.

Too late, eventually, to see *The Killing Fields* in town, I settled for a fistful of tokens at the local video game centre and extended my *10 Yard Fight* best to 105,000. The game's a fascinating grid-iron-based affair with lots of room for personal style and sloppiness. Outside the Wellington Wind blew with a ferocity way in excess of that necessary to make its point.

After dinner with a couple of close relatives, it was off to Victoria University, where the punks/boots/skins were hanging around outside. I think if you decide to cut off your hair and drop into some Doc Martens you must have to accept hanging around outside places where people are as a major part of the lifestyle. Still, I suppose you get lots of fresh air ...

Inside, the hall (a good venue) the air was getting less and less fresh by the minute but the crowd was in good spirits.

"Well I know that it's true but I just can't say it!" lamented Mark in 'Betty's Worries or the Slab' (and you know ...).

"SAY IT! SAY IT!" the crowd called back in a nicely non-patronising bit of call-and-response. Yeah!

The Hunters were called back for three genuine encores. A louder, slightly messier gig than the previous night's. As far as I'm concerned the thing this band needs to do make this music work properly is get a little less tight.

The Zippy Tour had a night off and so sundry NZ band members and crew, plus Gary and Stig from the Hunters' crew set off in a mini van in search of a bottle of whusky ... we found two and you wouldn't believe what they cost ... goodnight ...

Loving and Losing Your Leather Jacket

Thursday March 8  
The maid looked down and smiled kindly. My early morning eyes still had her in soft focus. It was time to take stock of the situation. Face up to my surroundings. I was on a couch in the hallway of the wrong hotel ... but I guessed (right) that this was the Zippies' lodgings. I sat up and offered a few groggy pleasantries.

Sitting and then standing up was bound to make the head spin a little but the bells really started to ring when it became clear that my leather jacket was gone. CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



John (bass), Mark (vocalist), Wellington.

PHOTO BY KAREN DOWNES

that make you feel you should take at least some of it seriously and it was such a stream of unconsciousness that was driving stage manager Andrew Frengley a little batty.

"Hey look, I think I'll fly (string up from the ceiling) my lighting desk ... and we may as well fly the PA too,

concept had so much irony it was almost magnetic. In the event the scattering of faders I was allowed to use on the relatively huge desk pretty much precluded anything in the way of technoflash but it's always fun for someone as profoundly non-visual as me to play around with colours. It should also be noted that

the Toy Love version. Mark was keen to work out the song the next day and play it in Wellington. They didn't, of course.

Blowin' in the Wind

Wednesday, March 7  
Hunters and Collectors in golf mania shock! Drummer Doug

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