



If you've spent any time leaning against walls at any nightclubs, you couldn't have escaped the wicked rhythm of the Dazz band's 'Let It All Blow'. Heaps of hard bass and drums, cutting synth and piano and crashing electro sounds. Combined with the minimal but effective chorus line of "Heave ho, heave ho, let's all blow," the Dazz don't just "rock the house," demolish it. Is this a major sound or what?

On a bleak Saturday morning I rang up sunny Los Angeles to speak to Sennie 'Skip' Martin, part of the horn section and one of the band's main vocalists, to find out how the band saw themselves and their future.

The Dazz Band began as a jazz-fusion unit, calling themselves the Kinsman Dazz (named after a street

in Cleveland, Ohio, which was also the home of the O'Jays and the Ohio Players). With a shortening of the name to just Dazz and a few personal changes, they started in 1980, with what Skip describes as a "new regime". From that came such hits as 'Let It Whip', ('On The One', 'Good Girls/Bad Girls' and the electronic 'Joystick'. They have always selected a diversity of influences — Earth Wind and Fire, George Clinton, and the vocal styles of the great Motown vocal groups like the Temptations and the Miracles. But they've never been mere imitators, they have their own, unique sound.

Skip mentioned that they "listen to a little bit of everybody, and try not to categorise into any particular sound, because we have our own sound that we concentrate on,

as long as we play what we feel can be unique to us."

'Let It All Blow' is a good example of this unique Dazz Band sound. The inspiration came from "our keyboard player Keith Harrison who wrote the song, it was a dance groove that we wanted to add a little bit of vocals on. We felt that it didn't have enough to attempt vocals to identify the Dazz band with. We like to attempt to do different things with our music and still remain the Dazz band."

All the band's albums show a love for the big, romantic soul ballad — 'Everyday Love' and 'Just Can't Wait Till Night' and 'I've Been Waiting' off the new *Jukebox* album, show off the band's vocal talents. Skip tells me that he's a "romantic at heart, I go sit on my stool and think I'm Nat King Cole."

It's the combination of slinky ballads and the wild groove workouts that make this band dig into your consciousness and make you feel like either dancin' or romancin'.

If you've seen the Dazz Band on video you'd notice how well the front line work as a team, trading off lead and vocal harmonies, with some tasty dance steps — something of

a tradition for for Motown groups. Skip continued to say that they work on their movements a lot:

"We specialise in that and are getting ready to do some new ideas. We're considering a move in choreography to bring back tap dancing. Our frontline will be doing tap dancing, just to throw something in, and people will be saying 'What! They didn't do that did they?' Well, we did that, we're practising now."

If you can't imagine a tap dancing Dazz Band I sure can. Chic featured taps on 'My Feet Keep Dancing' to great effect. The visual element alone will be interesting.

Even though there is a lot of musical segregation on American radio the band gets played on most stations and this is something they see as a must for further success; the need for a larger audience, the search for the big crossover hit.

"We're trying to get to a larger audience, and not have the band being labelled as being a black band, a soul band, but just to be accepted as the Dazz Band ... getting all those elements in your music that are heard in all categories of music from pop to country to rhythm and blues. If we can get all those elements in our sound and still maintain a simple enough sound to be grasped by the general public, we will succeed in having a crossover sound."

That's a concept the New Motown seems to be very keen on at the moment, what with mass appeal acts like DeBarge and the Mary Jane Girls ("personal friends of mine," says the lucky Mr Skip Martin) tearing up both the pop and rhythm and blues charts, it's natural that the Dazz Band want to establish themselves at Motown as one of the big groups; and in having crossover appeal to all sections of the musical community.

The band is keen to maintain its current popularity and Skip and the boys are working on a new album now that's going to smash your doors down. I'm telling you ahead of time, because it's a project I feel very strong about, there are a lot of elements that make this current album as strong as it is. We seem to work better when we have our

backs up against the wall and are pressured into producing something that is gonna cause a reaction. And the pressure we've been dealing with is coming back with another album like *Keep It Live or Jukebox*. Something that's selling to the general public, that we are established and it wasn't a chance thing that it happened. We are getting ready to come out with this album, tentatively called *Hot Spot* — and you're the first person I've told!"

World exclusive time for *Rip It Up* and hopefully a consolidation of po-

sition for the Dazz Band. I left Skip with the usual question/plea about any touring plans and was pleasantly surprised to hear that the band and their management have been really working on coming down under. It's nice to hear during this Motown month that we could be visited by one of the company's best bands. Then we could see how well the tap dancing is coming. And perhaps they could bring the Mary Jane Girls as well — wouldn't that be good!

Kerry Buchanan

Brent S. Hayward of the Kiwi Animal Talks to Chris Knox of The Grey Lynn ...

Chris Knox is at home. Getting ready to put out a new *Tall Dwarfs* record, waiting for Alec's answer to the last edit, gray in a double blanket and having troubles with parasites. Brent S. Hayward is asking the questions below and makes music in the Kiwi Animal. It's June 1, 1985, and they both begin — 7.10pm.

Are your politics Left or Right?

At the moment, hard Left, what with all the hard Right at the moment.

What is your concept of GOD, that is if you believe in God?

If there is a God, it's doing some pretty nasty things, eg, the plague of AIDS, the stupidity of sports' killing people.

What do you like out of the Invisible World?

A small amount of music, love and respect amongst people. Have you always been interested in music?

As long as I can remember ... I can remember hearing 'Heart-break Hotel' on the back of an RSA truck kids' picnic and I enjoyed it. Dad was a singer, Mum was tone

deaf and that made me appreciate music.

Who are you reading at this moment?

The Art Of Walt Disney by Christopher Finch.

Do you believe in art?

No. Definitely not.

Have you seen anything that's made you think it was not of this world?

Yeah, but only on acid and immediately before epileptic fits.

Have you got any enemies?

I've got some people I love to Hate.

Do you believe in subversive elements? If so, who?

Yes, I do. I guess anyone who is not doing what is commonly acceptable and is doing it well.

Do you think the people you know are aware of the subversive?

I think a lot of people are subversive without knowing it.

Where do you get paranoid?

Don't often get paranoid, but when left alone with people to converse to that I don't understand that's all that happens.

What are your favourite drinks?

Barbara's Milo made with milk, and Elephant Beer.

What are your favourite foods?

A good charwarma, energy chocolate — that came from working at Cadbury's for two years. If you wore an armband, what would you wear one for?

At the moment I would wear one for sexual freedom.

What are your favourite colours?

Black and bright yellow.

How about your favourite clothes?

The ones I've had longest. I haven't bought any clothes for five years.

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