

Live

Johnnys, Goblin Mix Windsor, May 24

Outwardly, Goblin Mix might have seemed a fairly odd choice as the Johnnys' support band but as it transpired they complemented the main act nicely. After some time buried away working David Mitchell's guitar and singing into the songs, Goblin Mix are appreciably further along the road to becoming the band they promise to be. Mitchell's ragged feedback fits in with Phil Moore's 12-string jangle to form a sound that largely escapes the clichés of "intermeshing guitars" and heads off towards uniqueness. Moore is left to be more expansive on stage, gesticulating with long arms to reinforce his young poet words and breaking the ice with between-song chatter. The rhythm section sounds increasingly tasteful and attentive to the songs. Standout songs are 'Laugh At the Darkness', 'Hello, Goodbye' and the two projected songs for the record, 'Water' and Mitchell's nagging 'Wishing Well'. As yet Goblin Mix must still be *listened to* rather than demanding attention, but they reward the listening.

With the dose of musical merit over, it was time for the Entertainment. No, actually ... the Johnnys weren't without musical merit, but it was the well-observed wit and sheer engaging grossness that made 'em enjoyable.

The two principal Johnnys are New Zealanders and they do sound like a really good joke that a bunch of bored Kiwis in Sydney came up with over a series of drunken nights. It was appropriate that most of the gags were as



PHOTO BY KAREN DOWNES

The Johnnys
in Wellington.

familiar as a repeat series of *Star Trek* and whenever they couldn't think of anything to say they'd fall back on a handful of deliberately dumb catchlines and a plastic wave to the masses: "And we really mean that sincerely folks, we really do." The highlight of the talking was Spencer P. Jones' extended free-associating yarning in 'Ten Outlaws' ("So he unsaddled his horse, Elvis ... and took Elvis down to the livery stables for a rubdown and a bag of oats ... and the *Sun* recording sessions ..."). Naturally the jokes were pretty much the same the next night, even if the audience wasn't as good.

The music — graceless and LOUD, but expertly played for what it was. The songs weren't so much

songs as extensions of the image, a fairly homogenous stream of noisy geetar songs that most people could get the hang of after about four bars. The Johnnys showed a remarkable feel for sheer fun in covering both 'Fire Of Love' and the Violent Femmes' showstopper, 'Dance, Motherfucker, Dance'.

"The *drunker you get, the better we sound*," we were told several times, and it was true. Were it not for beer and standing on (and falling off) tables the Johnnys would have made little or no sense. I don't know how often anyone could handle seeing the Johnnys, but once, twice, hell, you just had to laugh.

Russell Brown

Auckland Acoustics Benefit Acoustic Confusion, Kathryn Tait, Chris and Lynne Thompson, Wayne Gillespie, Siren, Nick Smith, Mahina Tocker Freeman's Bay Community Centre

'Auckland Acoustics' is being held to raise funds for an album of the same name, which will feature the acts present tonight. Judging by the packed hall their efforts should be well rewarded.

First up is Acoustic Confusion, three men and one woman playing folksy 70s-ish music. They're back from a break of some months with new songs, blending strong voices and harmonies with a haunting mouth organ and guitars. The overall effect is professional and popular, but a bit dated for my liking.

All acts are restricted to five songs each, so as to be out of the hall by 10.30pm. Kathryn Tait is next with guitar and mouth organ, which she plays simultaneously, assisted by a quiet bongo player. She has a tawny, direct style and a knack of making people laugh. Her lyrics are the most audible of the evening — and, for me, the best. 'Wounded By the World' sends shivers down me, the songs feel true musically and socially. She goes off to a mountain of applause. Can this quality be maintained?

Chris Thompson is a "veteran of folk music" and is now back in NZ working as a duo with his wife Lynne. They're accomplished musicians, but I get annoyed by the lyrics, cowboy songs seem irrelevant to a NZ audience, especially after the depth of Kathryn Tait's songs. Their best song is an instrumental, the two guitars dancing together and finally merging.

Wayne Gillespie has just

returned from Australia and tonight is accompanied by a bass player and, in later songs, by Acoustic Confusion. His voice is deep and expressive, I enjoy the "Broken Marriages and ... Skodas" songs which he performs alone except for occasional sparse bass support in the chorus. It's spine-tinglingly sad.

Siren are the first band to excite me. Three hard-hitting, dynamic women singing gutsy blues. They mix haunting harmonies with powerful solos, singing Bob Dylan songs along with their own. They clown their way through the set, the audience hanging on every acid word and outrageous action, but their music is serious. Seriously beautiful, political and strong. I don't want them to leave.

Nick Smith and his band are young and inexperienced in comparison with their co-performers. They made their debut at the Globe two months ago and are the only band not to have an album out. The MC asks us to be open-minded — their music is different to what we've been hearing. They look more suited to the Windsor and I wonder what they're doing here — until they begin. Nick's voice bursts forth from him like a lion from a cage. It's raw, angry and beautiful. The emotion is right from his heart, agonised gut-wrenching howls and growls. I'm so absorbed by him that I find the rest of the band distracting; he doesn't really need them, as he proves with the song he sings himself. It's slightly like John Cale — almost as good! His last song is so powerful there are people who can't handle it — its chorus of fucks no doubt contributing to the apparent discomfort around me. Nick Smith is too good to miss.

Mahina Tocker winds up the evening on guitar/vocals, singing short, bluesy woman-orientated

songs. She sings 10 or so songs, joined by Siren for the later ones. Very professional (trained?) voice, sounding somewhat like Joni Mitchell.

The quality of the evening never wavers. Hopefully the ensuing LP will spread the news that Auckland contains some extremely talented and exciting acoustic musicians.

L.A. Steele

'CHILLS' FROM PAGE 20
ing. But at the moment I'm prepared to just work on what Martin's doing — I haven't come up with anything myself that I'm happy with. I try every now and then but I usually throw it away in disgust. There's been so many thousand mediocre songs written that you don't want to write any more.

If things go well for the Chills in Europe, they'll effectively become "professional musicians" ...

"Yeah. I don't actually feel worthy of that; technically I think there's a lot of improvement to be done — it's just whether you get motivated to do it. It was the same with the acting — I didn't feel I wanted to go on unless I improved a lot, and I didn't. It's just a case of getting yourself doing a bit of hard work."

Within the band?

"Also individually, I think. And the same with writing — the only way you're going to write a song that you like is by putting in a lot of hard work. If you keep trying, eventually it's going to work. It's just a matter of making yourself do it."

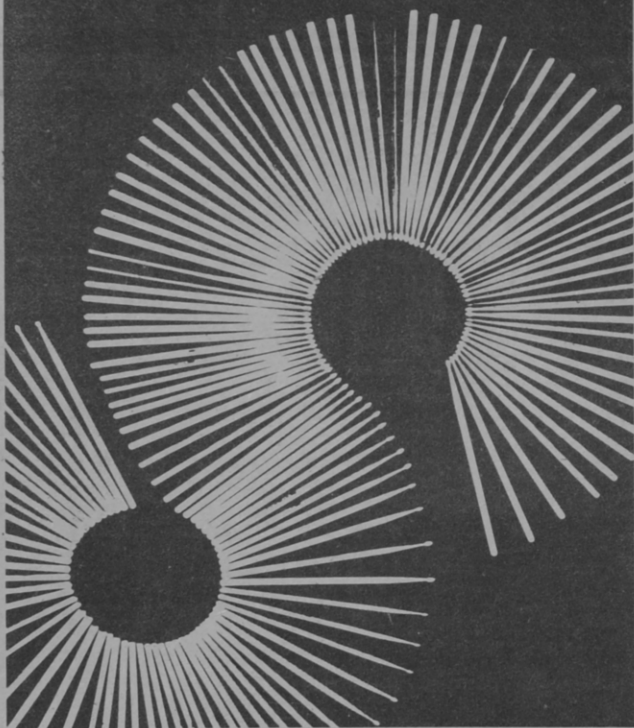
Alan

As we were told in *The Chills In Space*, Alan is "the quiet one".

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