

'*NETHERWORLDS*' FROM PAGE 12
to express ourselves musically. We're not great music readers and when it comes to actually being technically proficient at expressing how a particular piece or arrangement should go, we're not very good."

When the band decided to forgo a full-time horn section last year, it took things down to the nucleus that had been together since the beginning — not of four, but of six, including Tex and Ged, sound and light men respectively. As Graham explains, the absence of a permanent horn section removed the obligation to use horns on every song.

"And we're a bit sparser in our horn arrangements now," adds Malcolm. "With the four of us now, with the way we take song, Nick or I might come along with a song and we arrange them as a four-piece and the songs actually sound quite complete, with much more emphasis on guitar and rhythm. So the horns are more dressing on the top now. Whereas before when we'd bring a song to practice maybe a horn riff would be the first thing that would be chucked on top of it and Nick and I wouldn't really bother worrying about the guitar line or anything like that. Now, we've got the songs and they're just about

ready to do live and we'll say, well, what more can we do to them?"

Has the shrinking of the lineup thrown more emphasis on songwriting?

Nick: "Yeah, and I think the emphasis has shifted to songwriting a little more too with recording, because the songs then become a lot more important. When you're playing live you lose a lot of the subtleties. And when you're watching a band live you're less sensitive to subtleties than you are when you're sitting at home listening to it on your stereo."

Graham explains that the shrunken band works as much through personal unity as musical: "In a lot of things we have similar tastes. We're basically from similar backgrounds, all middle-class white boys and all those sort of things that go with being one of those."

Interesting, because Malcolm in particular — in songs like 'The Real You,' 'Nurse Next Door' and 'Too Full To Fight' — would seem to have a preoccupation with the middle-class condition.

"Well, it's the thing that I know most about. Dunedin's a pretty sheltered place — I think everyone from Dunedin would probably agree with that. It's a fairly insular sort of existence down there. And it's hard to write about things

that you don't know anything about."

"Touring's been good for us as individuals in that it has broadened our outlook a hell of a lot more than if we'd stayed in Dunedin," Graham adds.

Is there a danger of getting into another kind of insularity — that of "being in a band", touring and so on?

Malcolm: "There could be if we did it for too long. But just now, when we're not working with the band, most of us try and get away from it. Everyone's got very separate existences."

"And also, I think even when we're away we don't lead what I would call a rock 'n' roll lifestyle — we go out running during the day and that sort of thing," Graham adds.

"We've never broken anything — the TV's still got its screen," Nick grins. "We're fairly straight-laced boys in a way."

You've long had the "Dunedin student" image, or non-image ...

Malcolm: "Yeah, it worries the shit out of An-nabel (Carr, the band's A&R person, helper and invaluable friend at Virgin) trying to market a band with no image. But no one feels like trying to be anything we're not."

So has enough been done for people to stop regarding Netherworld Dancing Toys as a bunch of university students on an extended holiday? Particularly early in their career, they could often suffer a severe case of not being taken seriously. Nick relates the story of their first Dunedin Battle of the Bands, when they made the final after having been together a matter of months. Already they had an attendant flock of student fans, who "got on their 10-speeds and rode out to the Shoreline" to make up more than half the audience. The NDTs played a messy, enthusiastic and very well-received set but were beaten by a young band playing covers. A local radio personality who had been on the judging panel took them aside and told them they would have won but for the fact that they were a bunch of students out for a good time, whilst the winners were "a serious young band with international prospects". A year later, the same personality interviewed them on TV and quizzed them about their "international prospects".

"So have we shaken off that varsity image?" asks Malcolm of his two compadres.

"I don't know," shrugs Nick, turning to the interviewer. "You're more objective than we are. Have we?"

With this record, yes. No question.

Naturally enough, the Netherworlds would like to take the band overseas, just for the sake of travel as much as anything else. They have their sights set on Japan, but any trip there would be conditional on the local Virgin distributor,

Toshiba-EMI, picking up on the album. Which, in turn, will depend on how successful the record is at home.

What sets the band apart in some ways is the fact that, although they're professional musicians now, "real" professions beckon. They all have university degrees under their belts — Malcolm, for example, has completed his law studies.

Is he going to find it hard to go back into the mainstream after the lifestyle of a musician?

"Yeah — it's going to be very hard. Ideally, if I'd been carrying my profession through to what I should have done, I should be working this year. But I'm just not that interested. I think the band has maybe given me an alternative. Because making music is a lot of fun — and it's very fulfilling."

Nick: "Yeah, if you're writing songs you're being creative and you're enjoying being creative. And if you've been doing that for three years and you go out and get a job and you can't fulfill that creative urge, you get unhappy."

Graham: "Of course the thing that always comes back when you're thinking about the two options is that you won't lose your degree, no one is going to take your degree away from you, the opportunity to work in that field isn't going to disappear. But your involvement in the band depends on the other people being involved as well ..."

"It's here and now," Nick puts in.

"Right, it's immediate. And if you flag it away or leave it and say you'll come back to it in two years, you can't."

Malcolm concludes: "Music is also ... like you do a record and you think, 'Well, the next one will be better, the next one you do will be *really* good. It's the same with songwriting, you know your songwriting is getting better. Matthew, our old sax player, said a couple of years ago that he hoped the band wouldn't break up then, because it's really typical of all New Zealand bands, once they begin to get quite good at what they do, they split. It's just a waste of the learning."

So Netherworld Dancing Toys find themselves, three and a half years on, committed to something probably a long way away from what they had their sights set on when they rolled up to their first enrollment at Otago University. They've spent those years developing skills and talents within themselves that they probably didn't know they had. Even when they were enjoyable rather than exciting, they generally had the right idea.

In a sense they're four pretty average young men. And, given that they're drawing on music that they love, they're poised to make a respectable stand in the middle ground of the country's music scene. And that's really what the band and *Painted Years* are — thoroughly respectable.

Russell Brown

26 Devo, Knack, Mi-Sex, Wellington Special.
30 Sweetwaters issue programme, John Martyn, Elvis Costello, Renee Geyer, No Nukes, Squeeze, NZ Band profiles, Split Enz, Toy Love, Hello Sailor Citizen Band, Th' Dudes, Street Talk.
31 Sweetwaters, Swingers, Mi-Sex.
32 Police & Split Enz interviews, Sharon O'Neill.
34 Tom Petty & Street Talk interviews, Mi-Sex, Virgin supplement, Whizz Kids & Pop Mechanix bandfiles.
35 Quadrophonia, Bob Geldof & Kevin Stanton interviews, Newz & Flight X-7 bandfiles.
38 Howard Devoto, Tim Finn interviews.
39 XTC, Lip Service, Motels.
40 Martha Davis, David Byrne, Dave McCartney, Doors, Bruce Springsteen, Hammond Gamble.
41 Coup D'Etat, Flowers (Icehouse), John Lennon, Clash, Elton John.
42 Clash interview, Cold Chisel, INXS, Tigers, Jo Jo Zep, Bonich/Tliders.
44 Adam Ant, Associates & Police interviews, Stevie Wonder.
48 Cold Chisel, Blams, Wgtn Zone.
49 Angels, Beat, Lemmy Motorhead, Desmond Dekker, Heavy Metal Guide.
50 Swingers, U2, Psychedelic Furs, the Clean.
51 Newmatics, Cramps, Stray Cats, UB40, Blind Date & Gordons interviews.
52 Echo and the Bunnymen, Danse Macabre, Penknife, Glides, Mockers, Valentinos, Jimmy & the Boys.
54 Dave McCartney & Pink Flamingos,

Go-Gos interview, Sunnyboys, INXS.
56 Teardrop Explodes, DD Smash, Mick Jones Part 2, Neighbours, Richard Burgess.
57 Clean, Pretenders, South Island bands, Joan Armatrading, Mental As Anything, Chaz Jankel.
58 Blams, Teardrops, Hall & Oates, Bill Wyman, Kottke/Redbone interviews.
59 Human League, Men At Work, Chills, Tim Finn, Motels, Elvis Costello live, Furtive EP.
61 Graham Brazier & Harry Lyon, Fall, Jim Carrol, Daggy & the Dickheads, Hip Singles, Dropbears.
63 Simple Minds, Jim Kerr interviewed, Split Enz Part 2, Renee Geyer, Nocturnal Projections, Willie Dayson Blues Band, Hunters & Collectors.
65 Yazoo (Alison Moyet interview), Joe Cocker, Zoo (ex Pop Mechanix), Guriz, Jo Jo Zep.
68 Herbs, Culture Club, Bauhaus, Kiwi Animal, No Tag, Sharon O'Neill, Thompson Twins, ChCh Special (Wastrels, Flying Nun, Bill Dieren, etc.)
69 Joni Mitchell, Dance Exponents, Who, Neighbours, Dire Straits, Talk Talk, Miltown Stowaways, Blond Comedy.
73 Wham, Dead Kennedys, Coconut Rough, Angels, Marginal Era, Grammar Boys, Fishschool, John Cale, Studio profile.
74 Malcolm McLaren, Heaven 17, Joan Armatrading, Sharon O'Neill, Children's Hour.
75 Tim Finn, John Cale, Jonathan Richmond, Hammond Gamble, Dick Driver,

80 Police, Paul Young, Motown feature, John Peel Wastrels, Bryan Adams, Big Chill.
81 Smiths, Mockers, Def Leppard, Violent Femmes, Miltown Stowaways, Chills, Doublehappys, Marvin Gaye, Alfred Hitchcock.
82 Billy Idol, Pamela Stephenson, Four Tops, Temptations, Verlaines, Uriah Heep.
83 Elvis Costello, Thompson Twins, Netherworld Dancing Toys, Mockers, Paul Morley.
84 Style Council (Paul Weller interview), Echo & the Bunnymen, Midnight Oil, Kiwi Animal, Sneaky Feelings, Depeche Mode.
85 Mockers, Special AKA, Motorhead, Icehouse, Great Unwashed, Coconut Rough, Neil Finn, Fixx.
86 U2, REM, OMD, Hoodoo Gurus, Dance Exponents, Jive Bombers, Alligator Blues, Stylistics.
87 DD Smash, U2, Bill Dieren Pt 1, Nick Cave, Stevie Ray Vaughan.
88 Herbs, Talking Heads, Aztec Camera, Narcs, Car Crash Set, Axemen, SPK.

89 Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Beatles, Deep Purple, ZZ Top, Twisted Sister, Aotea Riot, Eurogliders, Rip, Say Yes To Apes, Look Blue Go Purple.
90 Lou Reed, Go-Between, Paul Hewson, Topp Twins.
91 Neil Young, Giorgio Moroder, Waterboys, David Puttnam, Freudian Slips, Electric Pandas.
92 Hunters and Collectors, Lloyd Cole, Pelicans, Peter Garrett, Left Right & Centre, Economic Wizards.
93 Dance Exponents, Huey Lewis, Robert Palmer (Power Station), Peking Man, Circus Block 4, This Kind Of Punishment.
94 New Order interview, Iron Maiden, Stranglers, Johnnys, Michael Winslow, Plans For A Building.

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