

'LIVE' FROM PAGE 36
ing and arranging these bands. Simon Lynch, the keyboardist in Sidewalk, has the talent and with some overseas experience could put something down on vinyl. All the bands have the potential to define a real New Zealand funk sound — after years of consolidating their sound and learning from American bands, they're just great.
It's your fault if you miss something this good.
Kerry 'Controversy' Buchanan

Lady Sings the Blues
Performance Cafe, July 25
Having never been to the Performance Cafe before, it was an enjoyable experience to walk into a small, crowded, very warm place that was jumping — and except

for set changes that's the way it stayed all night. Got the picture? Sorry to have missed 'Cut Lunch and a Team of Huskies' — two women from what was Siren, I believe. We arrived half way through Katy Soljack's set and caught 'Ain't Nobody's Business'; settling in for a good night looked easy. Everyone else seemed to know the women performing and Maria Monet was given an almost ecstatic welcome. She looked wonderful, sang wonderfully and I particularly remember 'Sleazy'. Maria Monet is a PRESENCE!
Last were Mahia Blackmore and two other women who're in Meg and the Phones. Mahia has a voice that, truly, pins you to the wall — I can't remember song titles but by this time it was Danceville, Arizona, they were amazing. I do remember Mahia, Katy and Maria's

version of the Vanilla Fudge's 'You Keep Me Hangin' On'. A great ending to a neat, neat night — for me anyway, as it was exit to work.
Lady Sings the Blues is about women's blues — raunchy and dancy and entirely good for your soul. It's also happening every month at the Performance Cafe from now on — I'll be there next time!
Fiona Rae
Taj Mahal
Suva
'RIU' writer David Taylor was recently banished to Fiji by virtue of his employ with HM Government, but he found that life in the isles has its compensations — like meeting blues legend Taj Mahal: Taj Mahal is huge. The blues equivalent of Mr T. He's recently

been holidaying in Fiji with his family. One evening in Suva I attended a private dinner party at the Java Restaurant at which Taj, his spouse Inshira and their brood were guests of honour.
For a man who sings the blues with feeling, Taj is very positive. He enthuses about New Zealand, having toured several times, most recently for Sweetwaters in 1983, and a more extensive progress through provincial centres in the North Island. On those trips he met Herbs and rates them very highly. Take note of that recommendation; Mahal is an eminent musicologist well versed in American black music and that of the Carribean. He also also raved about Dalvanus' 'Poi E'.
Ideally he would like to see musicians from the Pacific basin share their distinct heritages. On a popular level unfortunately the mechanism for that collaboration might be difficult to find. There's precious little money available in New Zealand — let alone the rest of the Pacific — for such worthwhile projects.
Taj is now living on one of the outer islands of Hawaii. He plays solo when the mood takes him and enjoys it. Recently he's been involved in a TV project with George Star Wars Lucas. This one has something to do with the Ewoks, will screen in the northern fall and includes Taj's musical contributions. Other recording? "Only bits and pieces."
After the meal the guitar appeared. A lengthy 'Freight Train' introduced 45 minutes of sheer delight. The ambience in the restaurant was ideal and the music hung in the air as Taj's gravelly tonsils caressed blues words. The second item was from the Mississippi Delta. Traditional gutsy fare. Then there was a tender rendition of 'Stagger Lee'.
At one stage a bottle fell over.

The clunk drew Taj out of his performing trance. "Hey, no problem," he said. "Y'know in Texas some bars have chicken wire up to protect the band from broken glass. People just throw bottles at the band. It's a real rough place. Just check your guns at the door," laughs. "You think I'm jivin' Go theah!"
Another three songs, including a drastically rearranged version of Mitch Ryder's 'C C Rider'. On two, Inshira provided vocal support. A soul voice, warm and strong, it made the right contrast with Taj's raw chords.
Taj and Inshira Mahal are good family people. The music they made was exuberant and affectionate. Mahal isn't plugging for the Top 40 (although his back catalogue or the available compilations are worth seeking out). His personal values have lead him in search of a better lifestyle. I reckon he's found it.
David Taylor

On Tape

Armatrak, Demo (Rites Tapes) (\$2 from PO Box 8809, Auck)
Armatrak are not the sort of band who make countless musical excuses for being "punk". All four tracks on this piece of musical mayhem are simple, fast and raucous. Vocalist Steve, in fact, has a tendency towards heavy metal screams, which would in most cases sound out of place and laughable but are carried off by the overall anarchic feel of the music. The lyrics are clear, saying what is meant without being over-ridden with "them and us" cliches. Four songs about religion, the suburban dream, big business and creative use of leisure time make this cassette well worth the money, if not for the faint-hearted.

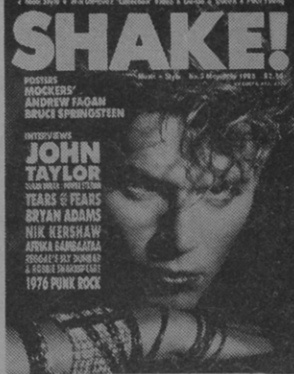
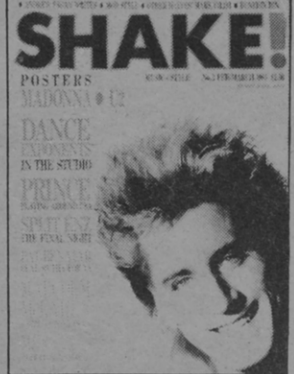
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