

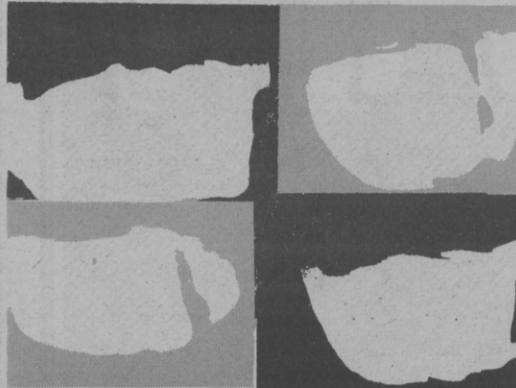
FETUS' FROM PAGE 10

"I would like to maybe introduce, rather than just having straight drums, some metallic-sounding things, just to make it sound a little bit different than an everyday punk band."

It'll be fine ...
you'll get it right sometime ...

Live performances with the Perfect Product took some time to get together after you returned to NZ.

"Yeah. I had to work out how the hell we were going to do it. Because a lot of that stuff, *Luminous Trails*, is 16 tracks — and I like the idea of making something sound better than the record. So I want to be able to use all these instruments and, as time goes on, try to mix live on stage or something. Like mixing in the stu-



dio, to be able to use all those instruments and have control over them, so you're actually inventing new things as you go on. It's really hard at the moment because we've never had a mixer who's been with us longer than a day before we've played. So there's never been any organisation on that part, which I'd like to rectify soon."

How much sequenced and pre-recorded stuff are you using?

"There's no sequencers at all. It's just recorded stuff, onto a QX1 digital thing, so it's almost like it's played as it's played on the record. The basic track, the bass and rhythm and a few certain subtleties, with the guitars and keyboards played on top of it and the drums bringing out more of a live sound, rather than that stale drum machine sound."

"I've got to get it right some time. It started coming together towards the end, because we were a bit more relaxed. But I'd still like to have a bit more control over it, rather than not knowing what the hell's going on. When you're on stage you're going 'Where's the bass? Where's the echo on this?' and it hasn't sounded half as good as it should."

One of the things that made the last Windsor gig — the good one — work was the sheer atmosphere of the place that night.

"Yeah, that's the whole thing. If you don't have the atmosphere it's pointless playing."

... and Vision?

Fetus Productions performances used to be as notable for the films and slide shows as much as the music. Why have you cut the visuals out?

"It was a kind of test, just to see what it would be like. And our stage presentation sometimes is fairly stagnant, we don't move very much sometimes. And I can't stand watching bands playing where there doesn't appear to be much involvement — it's like they're reading music or something. And I think I'm realising now that the visuals are an integral part of the Perfect Product, they convey a lot of emotion as well, and we don't have to worry about much apart from getting the music right, so it gives us a lot more freedom and retains that kind of visual enjoyment."

Is that why you sometimes use the blood capsules and so on? I know some people who really hate that ...

Jed looks surprised and Serum chimes in: "Yeah, it's funny! It really makes you notice it — I've had about three people say that."

"I haven't had one ..." says Jed. "Why do they hate it?"

"I think there's lots of angles you could hate it from," she says. "One is that if you want to see violence or something like that, you should really cut yourself, or it's not extreme enough, so it's a wal-ish thing. And then it's 'how dare you put yourself in such a wal-ish position?'"

I think some people don't like it because it's theatrical.

"I don't actually act. When I'm doing it, I don't act — I just like doing it. I'm not really trying to be theatrical. I mean, people have got their own ways of getting a kick out of things, this is my way of doing it."

The Beatles Ethic

You write some kinda pop songs. Do you think Fetus Productions have the ability to be really popular, sell lots of records?

"Yeah, definitely."

And still make really good, interesting, maybe weird, records ...

"Yeah, I wouldn't sacrifice the music to do that, definitely not. I would have done that a long time ago if I'd wanted to."

Serum: "It's funny really, because when you see films, people accept really strange music from films. Lots of soundtracks can be quite musically interesting."

People accept weird films more readily than weird music too.

"Oh yeah — films like *Brazil*. The equivalent of that in music ..."

Jed: "I think the idea all along has been for us to get into doing films anyway."

Does that thing of popularity without compromise constitute the Beatles Ethic?

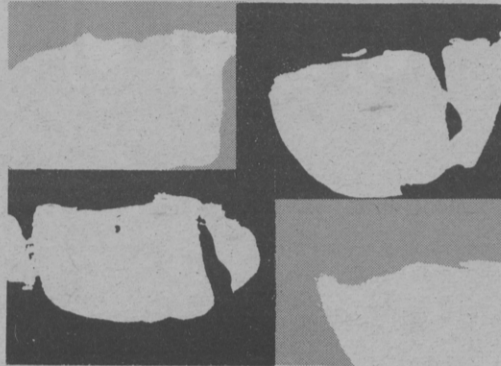
"Yep. I don't think they ever compromised at all."

Think it could still happen?

"It depends on how weird you are I suppose. Everyone wants something different to come through, so I suppose you'd have to be really different to be that big."

You're a bit of a notorious Lennon fan ...

"Notorious ... everyone reckons I sound a bit like John Lennon and I admit I've been a Beatles fan since I was about seven, so I suppose you pick up something. But I don't regard him like a hero or anything. He's just another human ... but



I feel very close to him, I'm sure there's been some kind of connection there, a very small connection."

SHOCK

Does it concern you that a lot of people still regard the name and the earlier visuals (of babies born deformed, etc — the idea being to emphasise that Everything has beauty, not just the conventionally aesthetically beautiful) as shock tactics?

"Not really, no. My father often accused me of that being the whole idea of doing it, but I didn't really worry about it. But he's come around to it now."

Serum: "Jed's good at defending it to people, but I find it harder, because the level at which they've thought about it is totally different to the level I've thought about it. Usually I find that if I've been shocked by something, not necessarily in a nasty way or anything, but by something I can't comprehend, I tend to carry it round for a while and look at all aspects of it. Whereas I can see that immediate reaction too — which is really suspicious, suspicious of peoples' motives."

Jed: "Yeah, that's right. It's like the film *Eraserhead*. When I first saw it, I wasn't shocked by it, but I was definitely impressed by it. And then after seeing it three or four times I liked it even more. It's different every time — you see it in a different way."

"Because everything's got a story hasn't it? And some stories are so simple they can be amazing or completely boring because you've seen it a thousand times. It's only where the story kind of loses itself and you have to pick up the pieces together ... I think that's where I'd like to keep heading, that kind of direction. It's quite a discovery sometimes."

Serum: "But you've gotta be rough. That's why you've got to not worry about peoples' reactions like that. There are some things that you hear and that are so designed not to have any controversy in them or anything at all that makes you think. There's excellent stuff and there's really good bad stuff — that's why I even like bad stuff. Something that's quite astoundingly bad, at least there's something in it. Things like Duran Duran, when I hear it I can't even think that I don't like it, because there's nothing you can pick out and say 'oh, wanky drums' or something. It's like it's just designed to try and offend as little as possible."

To Come

The Perfect Product won't be appearing live again for two or three months, but a tour by the Fetals, possibly for Orientation, is a distinct possibility. Jed and Serum also want to finish the film they're working on together (you got a glimpse of their handiwork with the video for 'Flicker' from the EP). While Jed concentrates on the music, Serum has also been working on another film with Richard Von Sturmer and some of her own writing. And Jed wants to ...

"Just develop the sound that's coming out now. This group's been playing this type of music for years and it's got to diversify a little bit. The production in particular I'm interested in, trying to find that. Songs like 'Anthem' and another song called 'Me', which isn't on the record, the guitars are creating, harmonics I suppose is the word, so that everything's got a ring to it — it's almost like a whistling. I'd like to get a really strong pulse, so the harmonics and the whole sound are ringing together. Just get this really powerful pulse happening."

"Have your motivations changed?"

"I think the main motivation has just been to be more in the atmosphere that I enjoy. Rather than going out to fulfill something, I've basically found what I want to do and I'm just continuing it. So I think the motivation's still the same."

Russell Brown

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