

Master Plaza

Concrete and Clay and the Games People Play

Just after the release of the *Mentals' Fundamental* last year, Martin Plaza found himself with 10 songs on his four-track and not another *Mentals'* album in sight for at least 18 months. The solution was *Plaza Suite*, his first solo album, promoted by the pre-release of his cover of the old Unit 2+4 hit 'Concrete and Clay'.

"They released it in 1965 in England," says Plaza. "It was just one of those songs that had been in my head for all those years and I played it at a party and everyone loved it. It was an afterthought because when we were doing the al-

bum I was going to do Joe South's 'Games People Play' and I did a demo and it sounded great but we couldn't get the feel back when we did it in the studio. So we did 'Concrete and Clay' and it worked right from the start, mind you there's not much on it."

I've always associated 'Concrete and Clay' with Verdelle Smith's 'Tar and Cement', for obvious reasons: "Yeah, and for me 'Down in the Boondocks' conjures up similar images. I want to do a couple of other covers but I have to keep them under my hat. I'm not desperate to do them but if in the future I, or the *Mentals*, need a sure-fire song to get an album go-

ing or promoted then I have got a couple of others. Putting out 'Concrete and Clay' as a first single from the album in a crass sort of marketing sense was the best thing the record company could've done. I would've preferred to put out one of my own songs but I could see their logic."

What song would you have preferred as the single?

"We've released 'Best Foot Forward' and that's starting to take off but my personal favourite is 'Use Me All Over' and that will be the next single over here. It would be very satisfying for me if that was a hit because that is the best vocal performance on the record."



Mental as Anything's Martin Plaza.

It's also one of the best songs on a record that contains some fairly accomplished moments like the tragic 'Out the Door'.

"It's an irony in a way that such a depressing subject should turn out to be a nice song. Last year this Melbourne couple put their two children on a water diet so they wouldn't get colds and infections, and the girl, who was only three years old, died of starvation after four months of just drinking water and fruit juice. Their boy, who was one-and-a-half, survived."

"I don't usually write about topical things but it just upset me so deeply and it's the only song I've ever written that I've knocked out really quick. It could go as a single but I wouldn't dream of putting it out because I couldn't live with the exploitation of such a tragic thing. The two people recently got suspended sentences."

The best song on *Plaza Suite* would have to be the closer, 'Bats and Balls'. With lines like "Bats and balls, lying in the sand/Devalued

days here in blunderland" and the hazy heat-drugged pace of the music, I took it to be a metaphor for Aussie life:

"'Bats and Balls' could have a lot of symbolic implications, that's true. But the lyrics were just about vague thoughts I was having slobbering around at the beach in the middle of the week in summer. It's probably the same in New Zealand but the beaches here are as packed in the middle of the week as they are at the weekend. A sign of the times, I guess."

Why use the term "blunderland"?

"It just seemed to fit. A lot of people seem to blunder their way into success and notoriety."

What about your comparison between gulls and people?

"I've always despised seagulls, they're always squawking and they're avaricious, selfish creatures and it struck me that they're a lot like people. All the words were written during an oppressively hot day. For the music, I already had

the chord structure, but I was after that heavy, oppressive summer feel."

On 'I Could Be So Good' you rescue a basically duff song with a nifty middle eight that should've been the basis for a song in itself:

"I appreciate your point and that's the only thing I'd recycled on the album, everything else is new. I thought the middle eight deserved another run, that's why I used it. On that song I wanted to do something funky, for want of a better word, and that middle eight seemed to fit in and it gave the song a new colour."

For you, what makes a good song?

"What annoys me are lyrical clichés as sometimes when you hear a song you can see the next line coming a mile off, those rhymes. There's obviously a mathematical limit to the rhymes you can make but some people go for the obvious every time. A song's got to work as a whole like a film or a picture. It would be easier to say what makes a bad song."

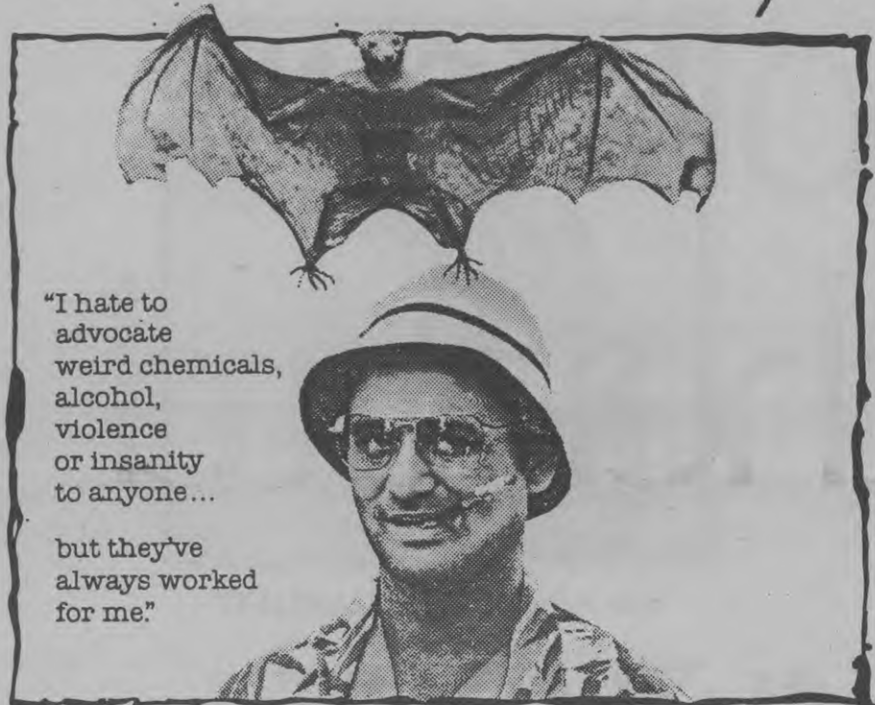
So on *Plaza Suite* Plaza has shown that he can do it on his own away from the four songwriters' luxury of the *Mentals*, but that luxury has its own compensations:

"That's one of the reasons we've managed to stay together so long, as usually in a band you get one man who's the front man and he gets all the royalties and attention. And when you've been working for a few years that's the kind of thing that starts to piss everyone off. We do a fair publishing split, even our drummer Wayne Delisle, who's only helped out on a couple of songs is included in the publishing as well. There's none of that competitive I've-gotta-have-more-songs-on-the-record-because-I-need-more-money sorta thing. There's no sour grapes, so we exist happily together."

George Kay

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44 Adam Ant, Associates & Police interviews, Stevie Wonder.
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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.
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.
61 Graham Brazier & Harry Lyon, Fall, Jim Carroll, 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 Cooker, 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.
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.
81 Smiths, Mockers, Def Leppard, Violent Femmes, Miltown Stowaways, Chills, Doublehappys, Marvin Gaye.
82 Billy Idol, Pamela Stephenson, Four Tops, Temptations, Verlaines.
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.
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, Apes, Look Blue Go Purple.
90 Lou Reed, Go-Between, Paul Hewson, Topo 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.
95 Chills, Killing Joke, Dazz Band, Expendables, Jason & the Scorchers.
Last Man Down.
96 Netherworld Dancing Toys, China Crisis, Robert Plant, Doublehappys, Kiwi Animal, Nils Lotgren.
97 Bryan Ferry, Dynamic Hepnotics, Men At Work, Bats, Shriekback.
98 Mockers, Mental As Anything, Reggae, John Boorman, Bird Nest Roys.
99 Narcs, Bangles, REM, Jerry Harrison, Christchurch in Spring.
100 NZ Music 1977-85, RLU's Believe It Or Not, Tina Turner, Damned.
101 Verlaines, Drongos, Sam Hunt, WASP.
102 Thompson Twins, Tom Petty, Violent Femmes, Chills.
103 Feargal Sharkey, INXS, Fetus Productions.
104 Atlantic Soul, Bob Dylan, Stevie Ray, Go-Betweens, BFM LP, Johnnys, Roy Harper.



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Wed 18 Zaks, Hamilton
Thu 19 Ngamutu, N. Plymouth
Fri 20 Rutland, Wanganui
Sat 21 Paraparaumu Hotel

Sun 22 Candyos Night Club, L. Hutt
Mon 23 Clyde Quay, Wellington
Tue 24 Z Night Club, P. North
Wed 25 Solway Park, Masterton
Thu 26 Vidals Wine Bar, Hastings
Fri 27 Tamatea Hotel, Napier
Sat 28 De Bretts, Taupo
Sun 29 Waiwera Hotel, Waiwera

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