



The Braille collective (L-R): Anthony Donaldson, Gerard Crendson, David Watson, Janet Roddick, David Long, David Donaldson, Stuart Porter, Richard Sedger. On roof: "Malcolm Reid".

## Aural Vision

From the nucleus of the Primitive Art Group has evolved a core of musicians who are behind much of the experimental and improvisational music in Wellington — and the formation of Braille Records, an independent label that has already released eight albums.

Braille Records was formed by a Wellington collective last year to release the Primitive Art Group's album *Five Dread Dropdown*. Shortly afterwards, Braille released three more records, by Jawclap, Black Sheep and Jungle Suite. This month, four more albums have emerged from the Braille stable. But behind all these releases is a collective of about 10 musicians who interchange to form different groups to explore new musical areas.

Stuart Porter, one of the people behind Braille, and who has been in the Primitive Art Group, Black Sheep and now Family Mallet, explains: "We're a fairly close knit combination of musicians. Most of the them are involved in several groups; some of the groups we form last a long time, some don't. Usually if they put out a record, they've deve-

loped an identity."

The four new releases by Braille are the work of the collective over the last year; the groups are the Family Mallet, Four Volts, Rabbit Lock, and a solo album by David Watson. All the records were recorded with the assistance of Arts Council grants via their "New Recording Grants" and "New Commissions Fund" schemes. The Wellington Media Collective is responsible for the production of the colourful record sleeves, which were screen-printed to save costs on the 300 unit print run of each album — but the results are quite individualistic works of art.

"Even though we're putting the four albums out together, they are quite radically different LPs," says Porter. "There's a strong emphasis on free collective improvisation,

though not necessarily to jazz standards but from a variety of musical traditions. There's a lot of humour in all the LPs, and playing with voices and rhythms — the music's not squeaky pop or free jazz."

Here's a rundown of the four interconnecting groups:

*Something's Burning* is by the four-piece Four Volts, a group which combines the collective's usual interest in improvisation with covers of such classic tunes such as 'Light My Fire', 'Stormy Weather' and 'These Boots Were Made For Walking'. A popular live act, according to Porter, they have toured the North Island with Rabbit Lock.

*Backbone* is by Rabbit Lock, a three-piece with "invited guests" from the collective. "They perform a variety of styles," says Porter. "Acoustic, country (they use banjos, even), blues and underground funk."

*Bosch's Bottom* is a posthumous release by Family Mallet, a trio that performed together for three years using various brass and woodwind instruments. "It's mostly original material that ranges from free Dixieland jazz to carnival music and nursery rhymes."

David Watson's solo LP *Reference* is "a culmination of the music he's been doing for the last five years," says Porter. "He uses guitars, banjo and organ for his improvisations, with a lot of improvisations, using overdubs and electronic equipment such as samplers. It's a very electric sound; much of it is very free."

The four records have been released now as several of the members of the collective are going overseas. "It also seemed a good idea to put them out as a package to make more impact," says Porter. "Now we want to consolidate the label and get the eight LPs working for us. We hope to get an overseas distributor to take them up." In New Zealand, the Braille records should be in the major record stores. If you have trouble finding them, write to: Braille Records, P O Box 11-816, Wellington.

CB

## Rumours

### USA & UK

**Tom Waits'** play *Frank's Wild Years* has opened in Chicago with Waits in the lead role ... **Sting** has released a live double album *Bring on the Night* from last year's solo tour ... **Polystyrene** of the X Ray Spex has made a comeback single 'Gods and Goddesses' after six year's silence while she followed Krishna ... **David Bowie** has written the title song, and Pink Floyd's **Roger Waters** the score for the animated film of Raymond Briggs' book *When the Wind Blows* ... **Wreckless Eric** is now fronting the **Len Bright Combo**, with a new single 'Someone Must've Nailed Us Together' ... **Lou Reed**, **Jackson Brown**, **Bob Dylan**, **Tom Petty**, **Peter Gabriel**, **Sting**, **Dave Stewart**, **Bob Geldof**, **Bryan Adams** and **U2** performed at the Los Angeles' Forum last month for Amnesty International's 25th anniversary; some of the performers will tour for the cause through the States ... The **Smiths'** *The Queen is Dead* shot to No 1 on Britain's indie charts first week out ... will **Pete Dinklage** replace **Holly in Frankie GTH**?

The **Dead Kennedy's Jello Biafra** faces a year in jail and a heavy fine if he's found guilty of "distributing harmful matter to minors", namely the poster by Giger entitled 'Penis Landscape' enclosed in their *Frankenchrist* LP ... after 18 months break, **Spandau Ballet** are back in action after settling their dispute with Chrysalis. Their new single is 'Fight for Ourselves' ... *The Class of 55* is a new LP by the original Sun Records' "Million Dollar Quartet" recorded last year in Memphis. **Jerry Lee Lewis**, **Carl Perkins**, **Johnny Cash** and **Roy Orbison** were there, **Elvis Presley** couldn't make it, so **Sam Phillips**, **John Fogerty** and **Dave Edmunds** came instead ... **Jack Bruce** has returned, with a re-recording of the **Cream** classic he wrote with **Eric Clapton**, 'I Feel Free' ... **Don Johnson** of *Miami Vice* has recorded an LP, with help from **Stevie Ray Vaughan**, **Bonnie Raitt** and Allman Brother **Dicky Betts** ... **Monkees** **Peter Tork**, **Mickey Dolenz** and **Davey Jones** are cur-

rently on a 120-date US tour, with support acts **Herman's Hermits** (without **Peter Noone**) and **Gary Puckett and the Union Gap**. **Mike Nesmith** stayed away ... finally, has **Van Morrison** given up Scientology? His new album is allegedly called *No Teacher, No Mentor, No Guru* — does that mean no name-dropping?

### Wellington

**Idiot Records**, through a distribution deal with Warner Brothers, will be cutting and pressing a new 10-song album by **Circus Block 4** with a view to distributing it in Holland and the rest of Europe. Most of the tracks are from *The Coloured Gate* recorded last year. No release date is known, and although there will be no local pressings, Jayrem will import some copies for local consumption ... recording in Frontier studios are **Compos Mentis**, **Skank Attack**, and album by **Tracey and the Whale Spotters**. The latter is the combination of several local musicians under the auspices of **Tracey Michael-Powers**, and **Crawbilly Creeps** and **Putty in Her Hands**, who have laid down one track each for Radio Active's part in the **National Student Radio** compilation LP to be released by Jayrem in August ... **Access Radio** stalwarts **Cindy Beavis** and **Pamela Fleming** have moved on after five years service to the community.

A music video compilation which "traces the history of the rock music video medium" is circulating throughout the varsities and polytechs over the next few months. Watch for it at your local campus ... after intense recording and mixing at Frontier the **Spines** have laid down eight tracks for an album to be released by Flying Nun ... July releases from **Jayrem** include a single by heavy rockers **Blitz** called 'Key to Your Heart'; a 12" called 'The Cutting Edge' by **Low Profile**, and **Aotearoa** with a 12" single 'E Hine/Positive' ... record producer **Peter Dawkins** is now based in Wellington and is looking for acts with good songs. Phone 692 339.

**Bill Direen** is currently halfway through a tour of both the North and South Islands. Accompanying him on double bass is **Barry Stockley**; see *Coruba Calendar* for CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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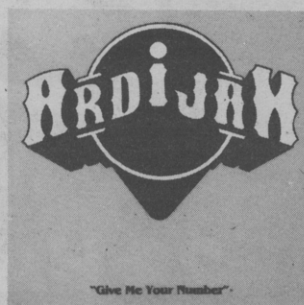
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