



Screaming Blue Yonder

"I'm not the King of Siam ... I'm not Buckminster Fuller ..." screams the blue messiah Bill Carter on 'Killer Born Man.' But there's a certain, ah, presence about the man and his music that makes one sit up and take notice of the Screaming Blue Messiahs.

First, there's the sound ... of a thundering "nuclear age R&B" steamroller that's about to bowl you over. Wailing like a banshee over the top is the pugnacious Carter, whose

frustrated psychotic tension spills out in a guitar-lead catharsis.

Then there's the look ... out front, the edgy, bombastic Carter, he of Yul Brunner's geodesic hairstyle. Completing the power trio are the straighter looking rhythm section — but there's a certain air of menace about bassist Chris Thompson and drummer Kenny Harris, too. Together, they sound like a Clash that were given enough rope — wired and without the posing.

It all makes for a demanding live experience, and with the release of their first LP *Gun-Shy*, and a world

tour in motion, the stars of the Messiahs are currently rising. They play the Galaxy at the beginning of November.

Carter is said to be a reluctant interviewee; certainly when *Rip It Up* finally tracked him down in Raleigh, North Carolina, after three abortive attempts elsewhere on the tour, he was "brief-and-to-the-point" — hesitant, but with a dry wit.

"I started playing guitar 10 years ago," says the 35-year-old Carter, "and have spent five years in various bands. That's not very long when you consider what it takes to be an architect."

Oh, did you once think about doing architecture?

"No, that's just by way of comparison."

Actually, after a rural childhood in Teeside, northern England, Carter migrated to London, where he spent time at the Bromley Art College. Lennon, Clapton, Richards, Townshend (an early influence on Carter) ... art school is the classic route taken by English R&B musicians.

"Yes, that's right," he says. "But I got a degree. Most of them got kicked out though. My degree was in fine art — painting."

He grew up listening to, "The usual sort of shit — early blues, early Who, all those 60s things. But I also liked R&B — but with a twist. John Lee Hooker, say, as opposed to your more middle-of-the-road Howlin' Wolf. R&B, like the blues, goes right back. It lasts because it's primitive, it's got honesty and commitment."

The Screaming Blue Messiahs have been going for three years. Me and the bass player had a group called Motors Boy Motor for 18

months," says Carter. "We made one album. It was a good one, but all those New Romantic bands were around at the time, so no one heard it."

The Messiahs released a raw mini-LP *Good and Gone* in 1984, and critics were agreed that the band showed a lot of promise. The making of the follow-up album *Gun-Shy* was held up for a while, however, due to a falling out with a couple of producers. On the finished album, the production credits are shared almost equally between Vic Maile and Howard Gray. "Yes," Carter elaborates, "we tried a few producers — mostly we had to get rid of 'em."

Gun-Shy retains the primeval power of *Good and Gone*, but with less of the rawness. "It's a slicker sounding record," says Carter. "The EP had more edge to it, but we're the same band."

While a dark, threatening tone has been noticed in the Messiah's music and frantic live act, Carter prefers to see it as an "exorcism of violence": "That darkness is just something you have to get out of your system. It's in everybody. If you keep it in — you'll screw yourself up. It's not just an exorcism of violence, it's an exorcism of everything — mostly, energy. It's no big deal."

Carter is also blasé about the recent energy to the Messiah's career: "It just means we're working, getting paid, and getting around. The difference is that we're getting a chance to be heard. In Britain, you can only play so much live, unless you've got a Radio One hit. So you've gotta find somewhere else to play."

On their current North American tour, the Messiahs have played

Canada, the East Coast, the Midwest, and were about to go down to New Orleans and across to the West Coast before coming to Australia and New Zealand. In the States, it's been 12 weeks of one-night stands, with the only respite coming in the middle when they flew home for Harris's wedding.

With so much going on, Carter is reluctant to give any images of the Messiahs in the New World. "While you're in the US, there's so much to take in. It's a strange place — like going to Mars."

One thing that's struck him though, is that maybe it's time to get rid of his beloved 1968 Chevrolet Camaro. Perhaps, after 'Twin Cadillac Valentine,' it's time for a Caddy?

"No, I'm gonna get one of those things, whatchucallthem ... a mobile home!"

And off into the wild blue yonder.

Chris Bourke

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overdubs. The result gives a rough idea of what the Rangers are capable of. "We recorded it live basically because of lack of money. People are so unenthusiastic about live music at the moment, you can't make any money, you're lucky if you break even. After six years we just needed to have something out."

With country acts like Jason and the Scorchers and Dwight Yoakam catching the attention of the rock world, Rob thinks their time may have come. "Fashions change, and overseas, country is getting bigger. The new country thing covers a whole cross-section of peoples' feelings, from the serious to the full-on rage of the Scorchers."

"It's been incredibly hard just surviving, but a lot of people are into our thing now, especially out of Auckland. People can take it at its face value, there's no bullshit. We're advancing, we're still a ragey pub band, but there's plenty of music there to sit and listen to. But you can't just sit and listen — you have to drink and rage — that's what it's all about."

Chris Bourke

Video

The Flamingo Kid (Roadshow)

An effective 60s period piece about a young working-class kid from Brooklyn spending his summer vacation working at a Long Island beach resort. It's the sort of place decorated in early 60s tack, heaps of pink flamingos and colour co-ordinated deck chairs. Matt Dillon is great in the lead role, having to make the age-old decision between leaving the old ways of his family or joining the nouveau riche at the club. Richard Crenna plays the new world man, rich from selling cars and cheating at gin rummy, but very smooth with it. Matt makes the correct Hollywood decision and returns to the reality of Brooklyn, leaving the world of bronzed beauties and big bucks behind.

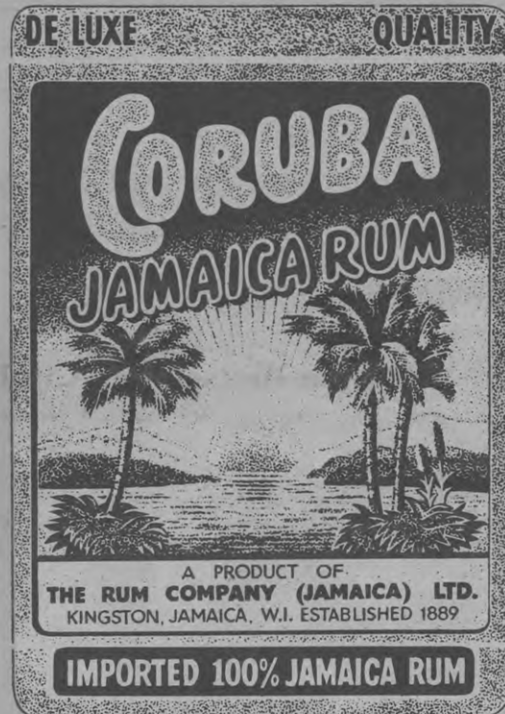
Fairly low key and almost old-fashioned in its approach, it's still a winner with a great musical soundtrack (anything with Hank Ballard's 'Finger Poppin' Time' has to be cool), some good performances and an attention to period detail that matches *The Wanderers*. Lenny Matthew would say "it beats with a heart of gold ... it rates a seven."

Kerry Buchanan

Do da Coruba.

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