

Ship-faced and Fancy Free

A Rime of the Ancient Mariners



Hello Sailor (L-R): Dave McCartney, Ricky Ball, Harry Lyon, Graham Brazier.

"I've realised there's life after the Velvet Underground and the New York Dolls," says Graham Brazier, no longer the perennial adolescent.

Ironically, at the other end of the rock spectrum, the Velvets still wield their influence on young bands. But times have changed. Harry Lyon knew that when he saw Lou Reed advertising Honda motor scooters, and the man himself jogging in Central Park. "And that turned me completely!" he says.

Hello Sailor achieved a lot during their reign as New Zealand's finest rock band, although Lyon jokes that their greatest achievement was that they all came out of it alive. Says McCartney, "The whole prevailing attitude in the late 70s was fucked. It was sleazy and out of it, and we got sucked into it. Now, the 80s thing is all positive — let's do it properly."

Doing it properly means aiming for the international

market with a polished album crafted by an overseas producer, financed by investors, and locally, a tour backed by an image-conscious sponsor. Things have turned full circle — Hello Sailor introduced sponsorship to NZ rock with the legendary "Rum and Coke" tour in 1977, and the Honda-endorsing Lou Reed is producing some of his best music ever.

Hello Sailor are one New Zealand band who in their

history had many breaks, be it recording deals, investors, supportive management, or audience goodwill. But despite that, they never clicked into the Australasian big league; they had a reputation for great live shows but "blowing the big gigs," be they at Sweetwaters or during their LA stint. "Nerves" — Brazier. "Idiocy" — Lyon. "Discipline has improved" — Ricky Ball. "We've grown up a lot" — McCartney.

"It's good to be back with mah blood," says Brazier. "We work as a unit. The Legionnaires were great, in whatever incarnation, but they always had a weak link. I used to have to work bloody hard to make it work, eating ashtrays and pouring beer all over my head ... I was just about going nuts 'cause the whole thing was on my shoulders."

"It's funny," reflects McCartney, "because evolution, you can't stop, energy is not reversible, right? The first thing I thought when we reformed was, it's insane that we actually cancelled the band out of existence in 1980. And all of a sudden it still exists. Sailor is perfect for all of us. If we broke up tomorrow, we'd probably reform next week."

One sailor decided to stay home, however. When Hello Sailor played the Gluepot last month, in the downstairs bar their original bassist Lisle Kinney was playing with his band Cheek to Cheek. "Lisle knew there was a possibility of going further afield," says Brazier. "But quite early on in the piece he voiced that he didn't want to do a lot of touring."

Drummer Ricky Ball: "Lisle's actually a very good jazz player, that's his background. He likes very subtle, light playing. And of course, I'm a bit of a thunderous player at times."

Brazier: "It's not the music so much as the lifestyle — living out of a suitcase, playing rock stars."

"Oh, we're not playing rock stars, are we?" says Ball.

"I am!" says McCartney.

"Speak for yourself, Ricky," says Brazier. "I'm gonna get my hair died soon!"

Son of a Son of a Sailor

Playing bass on all but one track of the new Hello Sailor album *Shipshape and*

Bristol Fashion is Liam Henshall, the young producer imported from England. Henshall's main claim to fame was reaching No.20 in the UK pop charts last year with King's 'Wont You Hold My Hand Now'. He came into the picture when he visited his friend Muff Winwood (A&R man for CBS in London and Steve's brother) and mentioned he wanted to work with an Australian band.

"Here's an Australian band who want a producer," said Winwood, throwing him 'Fugitive for Love,' the single of Hello Sailor's reunion tour. Henshall liked it, particularly the lyrics, and so he was sent a tape of nearly 40 songs to pick material for a new Hello Sailor album.

"We gave him the whole back catalogue," says Brazier. "Inside Out, Dave's albums, past Sailor stuff plus new material. He didn't know who we were, all he had to listen to was the songs without the history."

Through discussion with the band, Henshall picked the songs for the album. "He spent a lot of time chewing it over," says Brazier. "He wanted it to be, not a concept album, but for it to gel together so there wasn't anything too radically different in flavour. He wanted it to be a rock album, whereas we tend to disperse in all directions. Soft rock, ballads, reggae, semi-country songs, hard rock or whatever."

McCartney: "Which we feel is probably a South Pacific blend of influences, but he wanted to go for a sharper, contemporary rock thing, like 'Fugitive' with the loud guitars."

The songs Henshall chose all come from the 80s — none of the original Sailor material was touched.

"It's a bloody great relief," says Brazier. "I think if he had chosen 'Blue Lady' or 'Gutter Black' we would have all had second thoughts."

McCartney: "He thought 'Gutter Black' sounded like

the Eagles."

The first thing Henshall wanted to know when he arrived for three months work in the South Pacific last summer was, where do you get a good haircut?

"He'd heard we have good haircuts here," says Brazier. "We thought, Oh no, what have we got here — Sique Sique Sputnik?"

But in the studio, the 28-year-old impressed the band with his methodicism and musicianship. They went through every song, discussing arrangements and chords and how they could be improved. "He had a board in the studio with all the songs written up, all the chord charts and everything — very professional," says Brazier. "He juxtaposed choruses, verses, middle eights, things like that, and he particularly got at me about my enunciation. I spent quite a bit of time learning how to speak again."

Those familiar with the solo material of the group will hear the alterations in 'You (Bring Out the Worst in Me)', 'I'm in Heaven,' (sung by Brazier this time, to give the band a sharper focus for its relaunch overseas) 'Fugitive' and 'Remember the Alamo.' Most of all, though, the much-loved 'Billy Bold' has been given a high-tech edge, with added mandolins and bagpipes which have been electronically treated. "I personally had a few problems, readjusting to the new 'Billy Bold'," says Brazier, "but now I've become accustomed to it, I like it."

It was originally intended that 'Kings and Queens,' a new song which was one of the standouts on the reunion tour, would be the first single. Accordingly, it received a restructuring, but 'Billy Bold' got the nod. "We didn't think radio would play 'Kings,' that's the main reason," says Lyon. "Too 'hard rock!' To go on tour

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