

'SAILOR' FROM PAGE 20 with that as the single and have radio shun it would be a waste of time."

Although releasing 'Billy Bold' risked a "recycled material" backlash, it seems to have paid off, with many stations adding it to their playlists and concertgoers singing along with it spontaneously. Another reason for releasing the song was that although it has always been a live favourite, 'Billy Bold' and Brazier's solo album *Inside Out* — now acknowledged as one of the finest this country has produced — were virtually ignored by radio when they came out in 1982.

"*Inside Out* was completely shunned by the music industry in general," says Brazier. "I like it because it's my 'underground credibility, maaaaan.' But yes, it was quite disheartening. There was a helluva lot of heart and not very much money put into that album. Dave was with me in the production of it, all the guys in Smash and the Flamingoes played on it for free, it was very much a project of passion rather than a project of pounds — and that spirit got through to the public."

McArtney: "I think the album cost \$4000!"

The Bottom Line

Shipshape and Bristol Fashion cost quite a bit more ... after three months recording at Auckland's Harlequin studios, the album was mixed at the famous Electric Ladyland studios in New York (founded by Jimi Hendrix); Ric Ocasek, Debbie Harry and Daryl Hall were among those working at the studios while Hello Sailor were there. Harry Lyon: "To get a producer of Liam's ilk, someone who's working on the international production circuit, they would insist that they'd be able to mix where

they like — New York, LA, London. Liam had worked at Electric Ladyland, it was his favourite New York studio, so we went there."

Going to New York also mean the band could make contact with the music industry — CBS America, publishers, management — and negotiate for the album's release in the States. Now that the actual album is out here, the negotiating is about to start again. "We haven't got guaranteed release in America at this point," says Mike Corless, the band's manager. "but we've got a vibe happening over there. People in the right places are up with the play, they're just waiting for the finished product to make a decision."

The Bill Graham organisation wants to get involved in the band's management in the States, says Corless. "They're even keen to the extent of shopping the record around for a release if CBS in America don't pick it up. He's a big man in the US, we're very lucky to have got that response from him."

While the album's music seems to have been produced with the US FM radio market in mind, the same care doesn't seem to have been put into the packaging. The cover, an airbrushed painting of a woman in her underwear, seems rather hackneyed — a rush job before Christmas, or a publicity stunt? One suspects the latter, as at the album release concert the band were introduced by a living replica of the cover dressed only in bra, panties, suspenders and high heels. In the same costume, she appeared later that week in the window of an Auckland record store.

"The thing is," says Brazier, "it's the third Hello Sailor album that features a lady on the cover. They really want to perform about our first album cover, 'cause

it's got the same theme, with a nipple actually showing, and that was totally accepted."

Lyon: "This is a very puritanical age at times."

Surely the flak would come not from moralists but from feminists ...

"They're actually not feminists, they're moral police," says McArtney. "We've always had a battle with feminists. We used to play all the gay liberation dances, we used to get on great with all those people. Then all of a sudden a young gay friend of ours did a poster for us about 10 years ago, it was construed as being [anti] feminist, and they beat him up in the toilets of a gig one night."

There was an certain underground element that was attracted to the band in those days ...

"Yeah, the old sleaze thing," says McArtney. "We had it coming out our ears."

Taking Care of Business

While the new sound of Hello Sailor on record takes a while to get used to, live, it's (show) business as usual, with a fit and muscular Brazier gliding, spinning and hammering it up on stage, while Lyon and McArtney provide harmonies, the odd lead vocal, and their characteristic duel-guitar attack. Bass is played by ex-Coup d'Etat man Neil Hannan. "It's uncanny, Neil is very much like Lisle in his playing style," says Brazier. Combined with Ricky Ball's loose but solid drumming, that unique, slinky rhythm sound still drives Hello Sailor live, although the record could do with more bottom.

On the album, the keyboards were played by Rob Fisher, a friend of Henshall's who is in the band Naked Eyes ('Always Something there to Remind Me') and is a London session player (he played bass on Billy Ocean's 'When

the Going Gets Tough'). To bring the 80s keyboard sound to the band's live act, Mocker Tim Wedde was recruited on their recent tour.

Entertainment, drama and showmanship have always been a major part of Hello Sailor live, sometimes they even verge on high camp. Brazier's style stretches all the way from Cab Calloway to David Lee Roth, while Harry Lyon and Ricky Ball both did apprenticeships in showbands. "It's just taking care of business, and everyone has a good time," says Lyon. "I think the 'looking at your boots' stuff is just youth, actually — confidence in yourself. When you're pimply faced and 16, if you're confident enough to throw yourself about at that age, you'd probably be unbearable. Nobody would want to be in a band with you."

Nearly 10 years after Hello Sailor instituted a sponsorship deal for their Rum and Coke tour — which helped establish the pub circuit (and enabled a local band to have their own lightshow, and a mixer out front!) — the same kind of deal is needed once again to make a pub tour viable.

"It's great to see the breweries actually getting involved in music now," says Mike Corless. "After all these years, and the money we've put in their coffers through packing pubs — not just Sailor but every band — and they've never contributed anything, and they've always been arseholes to deal with, all of a sudden both breweries have got new products on the market. So Lion have put up \$30,000 for a rock award, and Dominion, just in the last six months, have spent over \$100,000 on New Zealand music, with the Kuitze Band, the Narcs, and now us. It's a battle that's going to benefit the music

scene, even though the association, I'm not completely happy with, but we couldn't do it any other way. The hierarchy of the breweries has changed as well, they're much younger people now, and they're good people to deal with."

Sailing Away

In the same way, sponsorship — in the form of film industry-style tax write-off special partnerships, one of which financed *Shipshape* — is a way for New Zealand music to become known overseas. "We've put our stamp on the world with sport for years and proved we're a force to be reckoned with," says Brazier. "All sports are sponsored, you see Rothmans, Benson and Hedgehogs — and it's beginning to happen with music."

Ricky Ball: "There's so much competition you've got to have backing in order to infiltrate the marketplace. You're in amongst a million other records and just thrown aside. If you've got someone pushing it for you ... that's the real world."

"Aggressive marketing" is their approach, and the band cites as an example the Americas' Cup and the (investment created) fervour surrounding it. Will local music ever receive the same support? McArtney: "John Boylan [American producer] made a very interesting comment when he was here. He said, if this was America, radio stations would be up at the Gluepot on Friday nights recording shows live-to-air and things like that. In the States they really get behind music. You don't get that here, there's a real antipathy."

The down side to sponsorship and aiming for international markets is the artistic compromises that may have to be made to get backers, radio stations — or listeners — interested. With *Shipshape* Hello Sailor may

have an album of consistently good songs that haven't been heard before overseas. But the musical test will be the songs that have yet to be written for the second album. Graham Brazier, needing two more songs for *Inside Out*, wrote 'Billy Bold' and 'No Mystery' in a morning; eight new songs were quickly written for the reunion tour to give it a more contemporary flavour. It's a matter of needing to, "... and it's getting the time," says McArtney. "You've got to sit by yourself for a couple of weeks, without people hassling you and the kids spilling porridge all over your shoes."

The other battle for Hello Sailor is the cynicism that they should still exist at all — if radio hasn't already killed New Zealand rock music, negativity will — but their audience will decide that, and your older rocker is in these days. Brazier: "It seems funny that in the music business, the older you get, supposedly the worse you get. You've got guys like Merle Haggard, currently turning out some of the most brilliant songs he's ever written."

Lyon: "Billy Kristian told us that when he was in Night, he knew Huey Lewis — he had a van, delivering yoghurt in LA. This album will do something for us, I'm pretty sure it's gonna get an Australian release, so we'll start working from there. Overnight success, there's no such thing. Look behind the stories of overnight successes, and there's usually 20 years of hard work."

Hello Sailor's "last chance to dance"? That's a cheap crack that doesn't understand why musicians become musicians. "If this doesn't work," says McArtney, "I'm quite sure we'll be more than keen to just carry on." **Chris Bourke**

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