

Craig has been talking to the producer of *The Tube*, who doesn't see why the Chills shouldn't be on his show.

"Doesn't see why not?" Craig relates. "After a gig like that what are you supposed to do, suck God off?"

Craig! Never end a sentence with a preposition!

A foul-tempered hangover stalks the outside rooms in search of me. I bolt the door and nestle under the blankets until it leaves, bored. There are weird things on the wind. If your brain was your nose it would be smelling the kind of smell that is harsh but intoxicating. If your brain was your nose ...

No, if I could I'd have water for blood, I would. The clearest, fastest water, like it rains in the country or jumps over rocks. This blood I have now is thick and brackish, like the slow, pungent water in swamps. Because of this I rot and stand where every second should be fresh and passing. What do I give up? Slow, sticky red stuff for clear, shining, fast and fresh? And ... no rainbows in this blood.

Feb 19

Amsterdam, Netherlands

It's a myth to think that when you go on tour somewhere you'll automatically meet the locals. You don't. What you find at this time of year is American preppies, hordes of them. Healthy and chubby, with voices like a thumb pushed across a lump of polystyrene foam.

It's a bad thing to say, but you come to understand the logic of all the *Halloweens* and *Elm Streets*, where squeaky clean American youth pop off by the dozen. After a short time surrounded by hi-volume chatter, wading in with a chainsaw seems to have a certain appeal. "Omigod you guys, I'm, like, totally severed in the middle, y'know?"

There's a bunch of the girl kind sitting at the next table, before noon at the Hard Rock Cafe. They're drinking pints of beer but they're the only ones in the place not smoking cannabis or preparing to. They're the only ones talking. But the warm, red, seedy tone of the place seems to have coloured even their forthrightly ingenuous air. They look a bit sleazy.

That's the thing. The hash cafes of Amsterdam should be free of tiresome sleaze and subterfuge if cannabis is decriminalised and its sale tacitly permitted by the authorities. But they're not. They're relaxed and friendly but the man in the



Stowing the rider.

corner selling grass and hash will always be a bit sleepy, seedy and slow and there's a slight electricity to each transaction. Maybe everyone likes it because it tickles their sense of guilt.

It tickles something else to appreciate the way cannabis preparations from around the globe have found their way to the corner of the bar of a tiny cafe in Amsterdam. Cafe dealers will be able to offer a range including Mexican seedless, dry, dusty grass from Africa or Colombia, dark, spicy-smelling buds from Jamaica, hash from Afghanistan (purchased, they say, from rebel forces on the Pakistani border), Nepal, Turkey, Morocco ... and even locally-grown sinsemilla, the product of Californian consumer grass technique. The man will have a board listing his products and prices and possibly a folder, like a photo album, of sample bags. As befits its retail status, most quantities are worked round a 25 guilder (about NZD\$25) standard price. At that price for two grams of Jamaican buds it's not wondrously cheap, but this is retail. If it's all too confusing you can buy a piece of "space cake" for 5-7 guilders.

There are hundreds of cafes in Amsterdam but only dozens which encourage cannabis smoking. Of those which do, some are large, perhaps with two floors, some are small. Those aiming for young tourists have big video and sound sys-

tems, while others just hum with a quietly hip soundtrack and low conversation. The big ones serve alcohol, the small ones usually don't. Some are part of a chain, like the Bulldog cafes, which even extend outside Amsterdam. The Bulldog tries to play both games with its Leidseplein branch which has two basement hash cafes and a big, bright, airy restaurant for tourists upstairs. Periodically, a straying group of English matrons will have to be quietly told by the barmaid that hash is being smoked down here and perhaps they'd be happier upstairs. They have to be careful. One such matron last year was served a piece of space cake, hallucinated, and demanded that the British Foreign Office declare war on Amsterdam.

People ride bicycles, old bicycles, everywhere. New bicycles wouldn't take these cobbled streets and wouldn't look right. Wouldn't wobble gracefully like old bikes do. They glide through the arches over Museum Road, while a lone woman busking saxophone, long, dreamy notes, echoes around under the stone slabs.

(Still) Feb 19

The Melk Weg, Amsterdam

The Melk Weg, or Milky Way, is probably the most famous cafe in Amsterdam, if cafe isn't too mild a word. With a little council help, it incorporates two coffee shops, a well-appointed bar-venue, a theatre, cinema, gallery and bookshop. It hosts everything from African jazz to New Zealand rock and roll, and it's the latter which is happening tonight.

The Chills have played seven gigs since Dingwalls, in Belgium and Holland the setting-up at the Milky Way is noticeably more matter-of-fact, even though this is in theory the big Dutch gig.

"Lisa," says Martin, sitting down on the edge of the stage. "Apparently someone's making us a flying nun to fly above the stage. Do you want to go and have a look at it?"

Lisa finds the big staging room where two long, pale goths (Goths. You know goths? More on goths later) are working on their creation. It is not very Chillsy. It is not very nice. A purple-clad nun straddles a big crucifix like a broomstick. The dark side of Dutch Catholicism perhaps.

Lisa goes back and they all agree this can not go up. She goes back and tells the two goths they'll have to take the cross out.

"But it's a gold cross!"

After soundcheck, dinner is due. And due. And due. One of the prices of eating out in Amsterdam is the service, which is friendly but slow and

sometimes unbelievably disorganised. It takes fully an hour-and-a-half to eat at the venue's front cafe this night.

Stage time, 11pm, rolls around and the venue has filled up with a crowd spanning the spectrum from old-style hippies to goths, about 700 of them. There are a few sound problems, mainly with the old strings on Justin's bass, but seven gigs on from Dingwalls the Chills are markedly tougher. Maybe a bit too tough for some of the crowd, who look like they've been hit over the head with a frozen dog roll, but are perhaps just too stoned to move.

This full, the whole thing is weird. But mostly good weird and occasionally very good weird. This is a crowd with little use for inhibition. A blonde woman pushes her way towards the front, and then with slow and purposeful motions, clambers onto the stage and kneels on it, swaying and waving her arms. The stage man from the venue tries to persuade her to leave, but you don't do things like chuck people off stages in Amsterdam. It's not nice. Then she tears off her T-shirt. Then she leans over and begins holding onto Martin's leg as he plays. His expression is part pissed-off and part terribly embarrassed.

After two storming, noisy encores, the floor clears a bit and the disco, run by the two goths who made the nun (which ended up looking like a torture victim, strung by arms and legs above the stage), hots up. People draw round to watch those who choose to dance fling and contort themselves, no two dancing alike. There's a trim, healthy, hippy pulling some tai-chi out there on the floor, while an immaculate leatherchick frugs like there's no tomorrow.

Later, after the key to the rental van has been lost, given up, and located, there's a quiet party in Martin and Kate's hotel room. They haven't been partying up a lot so far, what with Martin having trouble with his throat. As a matter of fact the Chills are building up a backlog of beer — they're having trouble drinking their rider. The rider is the proviso a band lays down before playing and at this level it's standard for it to include, say, a bottle of spirits and two crates of beer. But pissy Euro-Pilsener at its worst can make one bottle seem plenty, especially when you put your head up and remember you're travelling all over the place and you're knackered. Anyway, so the riders are piling up.

Small, quiet parties being what they are, there's a lot of talking — a lot of shit-talk. Now don't get me wrong. What I mean by shit-talk is a fine thing, a kind of ambling, musing, storytelling talk of sublime unimportance. And from which, like any other kind of shit, good things grow. You'd be surprised how many people can't do it (many of the English, empirical for far too long, don't under-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

MUSIC ON VIDEO CASSETTE FOR SALE



DIRE STRAITS
BROTHERS IN ARMS
featuring:
MONEY FOR NOTHING

★
SO FAR AWAY
★
WALK OF LIFE
★

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Colour Dolby Hi-Fi Stereo 20 Minutes
RRP \$54.95 inc. GST

THE CURE · STARING AT THE SEA · THE IMAGES



THE CURE
17 Great Tracks including
LET'S GO TO BED
THE WALK
THE LOVE CATS
IN BETWEEN DAYS
A NIGHT LIKE THIS
KILLING AN ARAB
BOYS DON'T CRY
OTHER VOICES
PLUS MANY MORE

Colour 82 mins

RRP \$65.95 inc. GST

WHANGAREI Video Station - 15 James St AUCKLAND Sunnybrae Video - 49 Sunnybrae Rd Northcote, MacGregor Hay Limited - 218 Great South Rd Manurewa, Glamuzina's Video Library - 4345 Gt North Rd Glendene, Video Station - Pakuranga Town Centre Pakuranga GIBBORNE Video Station - 116 Bright St, Gisborne HAMILTON Quills Video Mart 750 Victoria St Hamilton HASTINGS Video Vault - 311 Heretaunga St, West Hastings NEW PLYMOUTH 221 Video Club - 323 Devon St East New Plymouth PALMERSTON NORTH Porter Video Porter Sq Palmerston North WANGANUI DJ's Video Library - 1 Victoria Avenue Wanganui LEVIN Video Centre - 7 Bath St Levin MASTERTON Hi Vid Theatre Chapel St Masterton WELLINGTON Cyclops Video - Hillary Court Naenae Wellington, NELSON The Video Cassette - 23 Alma Lane Nelson CHRISTCHURCH Quills Video - 904 Colombo St Christchurch, Noel Leeming Limited - 575 Colombo St Christchurch, Mr Movie - 319 Stanmore Rd Christchurch DUNEDIN Basil North Ltd - 128 Gordon Rd Mosgiel, Southern Video Hire - 115 George St Dunedin INVERCARGILL Video Corner Avenal - Cnr Dee and Fox Sts HOKITIKA Graham Electronics - 101 Revell St Hokitika

Distributed in New Zealand by Kerridge Odeon Amalgamated Video, P.O. Box 422. Phone: 32-206 Auckland



These and more music videos are at your
BBC/Polygram Specialty Store
Pick up a complete listing soon.