

'CHILLS' FROM PAGE 16

stand it at all). This night, old TV programmes are eulogised and it turns out that Justin, although a mere stripling of 21, can call to mind more stupid old telly programmes than anyone else. He's too young to remember *Gigantor*: "I only go back as far as *Space Ghost*."

As is their wont, drinks start getting kicked over and being mopped up: "Pat it, don't rub it ..." Kate muses. "Remember that? My father *always* used to say that if something got spilled. Did yours?"

Mmmm ... he was keener on "Were you born in a tent?"

Into a silence creeps a strange scratching noise from outside the door ... Investigation reveals Lisa, who went outside to smoke a cigarette, feverishly retrieving spilled ash. All together now ... "PAT IT — DON'T RUB IT!"

TV programmes ... by the very depthless nature of television they're a shared memory, because they happen the same for everybody. Everybody heard the Daleks intone "Exterrrrminate!" or Selwyn bellow "What'll it be, customers?" and they saw it all from the same, presented, angle. The only possible difference is whether they saw it in black and white or colour. That would



International cuisine adventure starring bassist Justin Harwood.

be the Kiwi class gulf in action.

"Were you born in a tent?" they used to say. "Were you born in a bloody tent?" when what they meant was "Will you please remember to shut the door!" A simple command would have been clear and

instructive, especially backed up with an explanation of how shutting the door saved on bills, cut down on outside noise and prevented unwanted intruders. But no, they had to ask you if you were born in a tent. As if you'd bloody know!

Feb 21

Patronaat, Haarlem

The Quentin Hotel is a rock and roll hotel — or, more correctly, a performers' hotel. At the bottom line this means they serve breakfast until noon. But it also denotes special qualities in the group of young gay men who run it in keeping their guests happy while keeping them in line. They have only had to throw one group out, the notorious King Kurt. The Chills of course are comparative cherubs, but they do have to have a parental telling-off on occasion. Andrew Todd, for example, keeps leaving the outside door open, allowing the cold air outside and the warm air in the lobby to change places.

He does it again. "Ahum, Ahndrew ..." begins co-manager Philip, with smooth mock ingenuousness. "Do you not haf to shut doors in New

Zealand? Are you not taught ...?"

Yes. We are taught. *Were you born ...*

The band plays this night in Haarlem, a small town not far south of Amsterdam, so there's time to explore Amsterdam for a Saturday afternoon and catch up with them later. With its lookalike streets and canals, it can take some exploring, but the locals will positively queue up to give you directions. An extraordinary number speak English. It's the argot in the hazy cafes too; you hear conversations in which neither side is a native speaker. Those are good to overhear, halting bursts of tonal fireworks with much more drama in them than privileged native speakers would bother with.

Many bookshops carry English-language publications as well. Notable among them is the legendary drug culture magazine *High Times*. It's an obscene publication in many countries — if the ever-lovin' NZ customs found one in your suitcase they'd certainly take it off you and probably want to have a quick look up your bottom for good measure.

It's pleasing to find out that *High Times* is an excellent magazine. It's well-written, very well researched and the four-colour printing is spot-on, which is has to be to depict the subtle but important differences between one cluster of brown-green buds and another.

Inside each ish there's Ask Ed, a comprehensive growers' problem page ("The increasing pH is probably being caused by the gravel, which is probably limestone ..."); the Trans-High Market Quotations, a nationwide chart of current recreational drug prices compiled from readers' figures; Activist News; a legal directory; a readers' Top 40 of favourite things (usually topped by sex); and even a lung-watering centrefold.

Individual issues include features like a Ken Kesey interview and short story; an enthusiast's (everybody connected with the mag seems to be an enthusiast) account of a gruelling trip up the Amazon to sample a little-known hallucinogen called Nu-Nu; good music features covering ground from the Fall to Trouble Funk (but the readership still loves the Grateful Dead, it seems); and a calm, serious article on the danger of Crack — and the way its mystique has been inflated by those eager to sell newspapers.

It's all made possible by heavy advertising support, from the likes of growing-aid manufacturers, peddlers of legal "diet aid" type stimulants, and all manner of non-drug products which intersect with the lifestyle.

High Times is a funny, informative, and, in its resolute matter-of-factness, quite responsible. For better or worse, its ethos is probably summed up by regular writer Ed Hassle: "Drugs can be your friend as long as their power respected. Drugs can grant visions, calm fear, expand the mind, and relieve pain. But they can also cause insanity, bankruptcy and death."

Insanity, bankruptcy and death are not prime considerations here at the Patronaat, a nice little club in a nice little town. Everyone is young and helpful (when you get old you move to Amsterdam and be helpful) and the DJ is a real sharpie, even managing to pluck out the Clean's 'Tally Ho!' for the occasion. He's rewarded later on with a 12" of 'Leather Jacket.'

Craig is back from London, bearing new bass strings for Justin and news of the van he's just acquired for the band. It's a ... Volkswagen. A hitop one, and Ivan Purvis is driving it over. Ivan used to be Sneaky Feelings' soundman but through Craig's good offices he's recently finished a British tour as part of the Human League's crew. One and the same thing really ...

The new strings render the rhythm section clean as a whistle, and before an enthusiastic crowd takes place the best gig of the tour so far. The crowd won't let the band go without three encores. You can even hear the words to the newer songs. Martin Phillipps may only manage self-conscious thankyou's between songs and encores, but he's positively bursting to say things in a song like 'Background Noise' — "I won't play drinking music for boys / Making background noise ... I won't compromise / In my eyes / and that's a promise I'll make ..."

He's happy to keep on saying things afterwards too, when two earnest young men from the local paper take him under the stairs for an earnest young interview while everybody else has a crack at drinking the rider. Even though he's been doing a lot, he's still an incredibly conscientious interview subject. Kate says he quite enjoys the interviews: "He just likes to emphasise that he's an ordinary person."

It's an easy load-out at the Patronaat, no stairs, straight out a side door, and the last ride in the rental van is only delayed while a young woman gives Andrew Todd her address. On the short trip back to Amsterdam humour is good and there's singing.

It's a weird feeling when you realise you still know all the words to 'Bohemian Rhapsody.'

It's late, lets talk Roots. Musical roots. Where ya comin' from. Some of the young New Zealanders trying to make things in music today might cite the first Velvet Underground album as the heartland, or *Otis Blue*, or *Forever Changes*, or *Closer*, or *Never Mind the Bollocks*. But those are the ones they choose. All these young people are the ones who spent their formative years listening to the radio. And what was seeping into those innocent musical consciousnesses? It sure as hell wasn't Big

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Cha·Cha

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