

# Live

'LIVE' FROM PAGE 32

Agnes of Dog, comic duo Terry (aka Rupert E Taylor aka Birdsnest Warwick) and Trish (Maxine Phlegm) on loan from the Titoki Opera Society, bridged eight varied media acts with tap dancing, an illustrated rendition of 'There's a Place for Us' (and the Kids) and their original Dunedin feminist rock group the Four Tits with live go-go hostages from the audience.

During interval, in their false teeth and dahlia decorated dressing room, Trish confessed "When you're improvising you don't know what you'll do next!" Terry: "It'll be drugs and booze next — think of the Kids, Trish. I wouldn't have wasted the money on the petrol if I'd known she'd go like this."

Massive Stereo hid behind wigs, a fire curtain and hulking hi-tech equipment to play absolutely soulless industrial machines. Steve Roach, I'm surprised at you.

Gaskrankenstation are the revamped Stalker Stilt Theatre. Interior space doesn't suit the scale of their performance, but witty costumes and apposite music gave charm to their Salt, Pepper and Little Tomato characterisations. They reappeared as silhouette performers in Jac Dwyer's Shadow Theatre, a visually gorgeous blend of Indonesian tradition and contemporary imagination with gothic narration.

The Te Kani Kani o te Rangatahi dancers featured in several items. Their crazy hoedown 'Mountain Dance' was an exuberant exercise in creative kinetics, the whole complex rhythm pattern winding down to a sandwich break as the munching troupe wandered off the stage.

Chris Knox gave his most intense and convincing performance in years — a courageous self-revelation, sung, chanted and howled autobiography with a cyclic background video of Chris's haircuts and growth.

Barbie, in a dual persona costume, presented original poetry — Ophelia's mad scene, scatological not herbal.

Graeme (Humphries) and the USSR featured piano and violin. Outstanding — anti-propagandist

'God Had a Megaphone' with slides and dancers making a political statement about the media.

Headless Chickens made the meatiest musical offering of the evening — fiercest talent in Auckland today, gloomy, sensuous, with screwy intellect and muscular impact — buy their record. Women in white with movies projected on their aprons writhed up the aisles for the final song 'Slice' (of your diseased whakapapa) while dancers staged a bizarre family reunion and stilted on stage.

The Happy Accident presented a refreshingly real showcase of cooperative creativity by performers outside the commercial mainstream. Hopefully an annual event.

**Jewel Sanyo**

**Greg Hickman Memorial Playroom, Christchurch, March 3**

When a personality as charismatic as Greg "Bags" Hickman passes away, it's a sad occasion for many people. When that personality is someone as involved with music as Bags there is only one thing to do — have a damn good party (or schlonging, as Bags would put it).

And a good party it was, with Fat Sally leading off by blasting a few cobwebs away with their own brand of heavy metal. Songs such as 'Ballroom Blitz' kept conversations to a strained minimum and one was left to wonder about the strange line of headbanging individuals lined up at the front of the stage.

By the time Neat Little Knockers (surely one of the longest lasting covers bands) came on, the dance floor was packed. Although Kevin Emmett remained on drums, as he did most of the night, and Brent Williams' guitar screamed through the likes of Van Halen's version of 'Pretty Woman', the Knockers weren't quite as heavy as Fat Sally and would appear to have adopted a 'cowboy' stance, with songs by the Hoodoo Gurus, the Johnnys and Jason and the Scorchers being predominant.

The Edge (minus Dick Driver) raced through a short set of their "classics" and had everyone singing along with their ode to punk 'Oi!'. They were joined by Robin and Dale from Boy, who managed a couple of songs before the event

became a free-for-all with various musicians (including Don Rae, Jordan, Eddie Olsen, Rhys Dagg, Lesley Birnie) invading the stage to contribute to the chaotic version of 'Wild Thing' and 'Gimme Some Lovin' which ended the night.

One got the feeling of being back in the old Aranui on a Saturday afternoon, when having a good time was more important than questioning the validity of covers bands, which is the only way to remember a good friend to local music. All profits from both Monday (which featured Roco Cola, the Rodgers and just as much schlonging) and Tuesday nights went to Greg's family.

**John Greenfield**

**Orientation Mardi Gras Albert Park, Auckland, March 8**

The weather was fine, crowd thick and various, dogs docile, but the entertainment less inspiring than that which we might expect from such an established group of musicians. Probably the explanation for the relative inertia lies in the fact that many of them had performed the night before to the better of their ability at the Maidment — and a sunny Sunday is very energy-depleting.

The whole afternoon started slow, as the starting time of noon meandered into 1.30 while the collecting crowd were subjected to the setting-up of the PA. The Abel Tasman broke into the afternoon in half-strength, both in numbers and commitment, but changed their line-up often enough to keep up a sort of momentum. Graeme Humphries' magical fingers moved a little slower than usual, although I must admit to being captivated by the 'BBQ' song, even in its bastardised version. And indeed, to being a fan of the Abels at their best.

Even the vivacious Topp Twins were rather subdued, although their set after Dead Famous People picked up some energy. DFP should try for more interest in their vocals, and I found their version of 'Age of Aquarius' odious and flat, on par with the current remake of 'Funky Town', but they did some lovely instrumental work, and I suspect would be tighter all round in different circumstances.

The Bats proved a good finish to the afternoon — even the sun

came out and even the semi-cool dropped their pretensions to dance. Robert Scott's vocals were mixed too loud for my liking, especially as he can't hold a tune too well, but I think the crowd were relieved to be able to tap along.

Gaskrankenstation, with the stilt-walkers, seemed to be the only entertainment apart from bands, and again, the setting limited their impact, especially for those who had seen them the night before under lights and with a much superior PA. Maybe there was other stuff after the Bats, but I fled.

A pleasant enough way to spend an afternoon, and the fact that none of the acts put on much of an act was due to poor organisation and a generally slack attitude rather than lack of talent. Still, the crowd remained quiet, and that's the most that any good citizen can hope for.

**Christine Rogers**

**Abbey's Star Quest Whangarei Skating Rink, March 29**

Haven't you always wanted to be Phil Warren in *Studio One*? "Listen, Maurice and Mabel, don't wear nylon cardies on TV ... did you knit them yourselves?" But hell it's hard work being a judge at a "battle of the bands" talent quest; I didn't know when I was dragged from the scratcher at 6.30am on a Sunday that it'd be 3.30am Monday before I saw home again. By that time 20 bands had passed before my eyes and ears, 20 bands, five songs each, with ever-lengthening turnarounds ... Thankfully (don't all judges say this?) the bands were all of a remarkably high standard and extremely well rehearsed. Only the songs let them down — out of 100 songs, only half a dozen originals stood out.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, put your hands together for ...

Whangarei's Short Story were first up, a two-piece playing laid-back Dire Straits/Gray Bartlett guitar lines against a drum machine. From Ruawai came Joe Public, fast punk rhythm guitar, a great drum sound and sludgy bass. Lots of energy but a bit dense. Trax from Kaikohe would fill the dancefloor playing their covers in a pub: INXS, Jason & Scorchers, and a bulldozer version of Billy Idol's 'White Wedding'. Blind Ambition from Whangarei seemed to emulate Pat

Benatar, but vocalist Maria Turner was relegated to tambourine after the first number. Their energy was hampered by the songs, though the Gary Moore cover was well sung. Puhoi power trio Jura put their heads down and steam-rolled away like Cream, good improvisations, but very indulgent. I get the feeling they went away smiling.

Feeling woozy and battered? A quick quiz — who were the first band on? C'mon, buck up — there's 15 bands to go!

Candy Apple Grey (Whangarei) presented muscle bound rock, needing more life, especially in the bass. Take a hint: the Church cover sounds better than the Cure; there's more to work with. Auckland's Jack Pudding were a pleasant surprise. Looking like 1982 — with a haircut on synth out front — and needing polish, but with plenty of potential, as shown by 'The Pirate Song'. The frontman Graeme Rhodes worked hard to be interesting, and best of all, sung his dark visions in tune. Tony Crawford's New Era Band was actually just Tony with a Darth Vader-like rack of machinery. But what a voice! Steve Winwood singing 'Every One's a Winner' and 'Hey Jude' to a backing track. Tony, loosen up, get a band, and cream it. Warkworth's Zig Zag had a grumpy vocalist, built like a brick skinhead, and a fine choice in covers: 'My Generation' and (I) Paul Kelly's 'Darling It Hurts'. The Pegs stood out, a well-rehearsed Auckland Byrds, with good harmony singing, accessible melodies and fine songs. Assured and capable, its time to go vinyl!

Halfway there! On come Liverpool Direct, exuberant local Beatle freaks, with fine, note-perfect versions of 'Day Tripper', and 'I Saw Her Standing There', but really guys, you look like the new Knack. After a long long break came Stick No Bills from Auckland, with female vocalist in jodhpurs out front, confidence and ability shone from all five, though they need a catchy song and more light and shade in their set. Pahi's Mike Nettman Trio with Carol Power were the odd ones out — restaurant jazz, excellent but bland players. Dodgy vocalist but great bassist Richard Hammond; the crowd loved his solo. But ... 'My Favourite Things'? What's — John Coltrane? NZ's David Lee Roth has been found!

He's Nicholas York Whittingham, midriff-baring lion-maned vocalist from Auckland's Red Adair. Anthemic HM from a Queen-ish band of narcissists; sadly, form without content — the songs need tightening, and less clichés — follow the bassist's individuality, not the frontman's posing. Auckland's Dark Harbour are a covers band, but vocalist Marty Clark was the discovery of the day. A great, true, blues voice. The band added something to the unstoppable 'I Feel Good', though the rhythm guitarist should let things breathe a little.

On the home straight now, with Auckland's Jamboree — a very professional stage manner, but a disappointing live act after their excellent recent EP. The songs get rather tedious, and the strong rhythm section doesn't make up for the weak vocals. Seven Deadly Sins were next, with the sound of Auckland soul, and they shone like a diamond in a day of heavy rock. Superb, crisp, airy playing, with plenty of feel. Two great covers — 'Shaft theme' and a Rufus track — but best of all, two excellent songs of their own, particularly 'Standing on the Edge'. Whangarei's Bad Baby were a rarity — a blues trio based around a woman vocalist/guitarist. But really, pretty ordinary. Things were beginning to feel like Mainstreet on a Monday, and I craved for a fast forward button. The Dolphins brought a nice groove with them from Auckland, but the first song (and vocalist) was the highlight; good bass player and saxist. Finally, nearing midnight, Auckland's The Keep were dirgey, but with good qualities — melodies, sounds and vocals — but a weak rhythm section. 'Moonlighting' was a standout.

Organiser, start the engine of the getaway car! Ladies and Gentlemen, the Winners! First (\$3000 from local garage Abbey's, plus 10 hours at Harlequin Studios) — Seven Deadly Sins. Second (\$1000 from Abbey's) — Dark Harbour. Third (\$500) — Stick No Bills. The prize for best original song (\$1000) was a tie between Jack Pudding and the Pegs. Now, a round of applause for the fellow judges for keeping spirits up all day: Debbie Harwood, Trevor Reekie, Liam Ryan, Dianne Swann and Margaret Ulrich.

**Chris Bourke**

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