

Simon Sensible Life after Elephunk

Does Simon have trouble with girls? Would Simon do elephunk? Simon says do this and that, but what about his own problems?

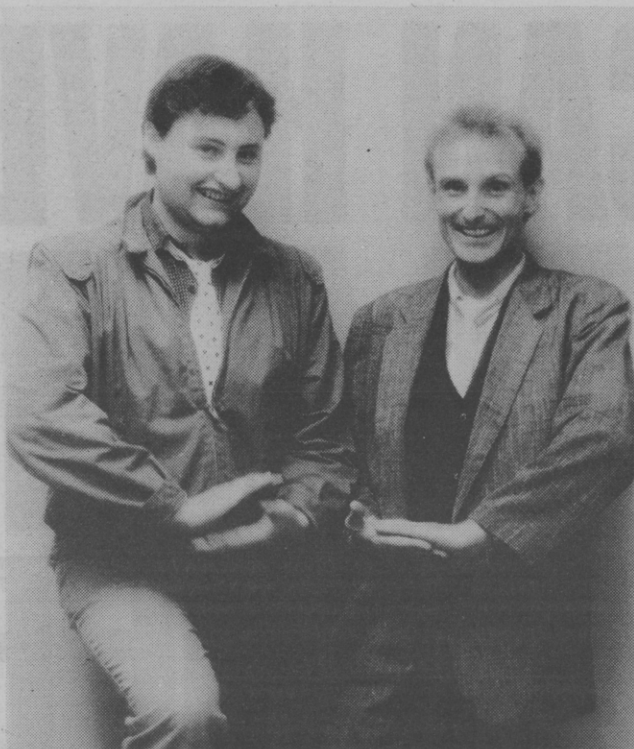
Simon Says is the latest idiosyncratic release from Low Profile, the duo who produced the popular 'Elephunk in My Soup' and last year's impressive EP *The Cutting Edge*. Behind Low Profile are Wellingtonian Phil Bowering and Steve Garden of Auckland's Progressive studios; there's an album forthcoming, as soon as overseas release is organised.

There are two versions of 'Simon' on their new EP — the "sensible radio playlist version" and the "slightly bent but still enjoyable" longer version — plus a new version of 'Elephunk.'

"The idea of 'Simon' was to retain the fun element of 'Elephunk' but take it a bit further," says Bowering. The song and 'Cutting Edge' were

composed early last year, shortly after Bowering returned fired up from a four-month stint in Britain. Both show the influence of the percussion classes he took with African musicians in London.

"The classes inspired me that I was on the right track, and reminded me that music's a celebration of being alive," says Bowering. "The polyrhythm classes were an amazing buzz, with everyone feeding off each other's energy. African musicians aren't loud but give an incredible vitality and presence to their music. You have to applaud people like Paul Simon for the exposure they've given African musicians. I've been exposed to a lot of different music in my life. What our LP tries to do is popularise more interesting



Low Profile: Steve Garden and Phil Bowering.

and diverse musical forms."

The new version of 'Elephunk' is mainly the work of Steve Garden. "He's put new rhythm tracks on it, with horns from the Newton Hoons, more guitar and a synth bass. I said, if you want to play around with it, go ahead."

Bowering describes Low Profile's recording methods as "thrashing it out in the studio — that keeps it alive. But I'd like to get a portastudio and get into pre-production more, just mucking around with ideas. There are logistical problems with Steve being so far away. A lot of the original ideas are mine, which Steve develops, but now he's far more the composer."

"Writing a good, compelling song isn't easy. Often, the intuition for an idea comes quite quickly, but knocking it into shape takes a long time. Working with Steve is very creative — he can give strong feedback and ideas; he's also inspired me to put more melodic arrangement and structure into the songs."

Consequently, the forthcoming album will have "snappy pop songs" to be "interesting and marketable." Singers Annie Crummer and Debbie Harwood made a major contribution to two of the LP's songs. "We said, do what you want with these. They did the vocal arrangements; I'm rapt with what they did. Steve and I are the focus of Low Profile,

but we're trying to involve as many other people as possible."

'Simon Says' develops the authoritarian image of the character in the children's game. To give the music a physical image, Bowering enlisted some pupils of Wainuiomata Intermediate. "My friend who made the masks for the cover, Tim Denton, is a schoolteacher. His kids listened to the tape and drew their impressions of Simon." The results can be seen in the video for 'Simon,' screening on RWP on May 24.

At present Low Profile are working on getting an overseas licensing deal for their LP, which they hope will include CD release so they can be imported back into New Zealand. Bowering: "We had an amazing response to 'Elephunk' overseas, and though 'The Cutting Edge' hasn't sold very well, it got played on student radio and even ZM-FM, and the critical response exceeded all expectations. But 'Simon Says' is a better song, and there's stuff on the LP that's even better."

"We've had so much mileage out of 'Elephunk,' it's amazing. I never thought it'd be a hit. Trying to keep the creative flow happening and our sense of humour has been damn hard. But we've got to show that there's life after 'Elephunk.'"

Chris Bourke

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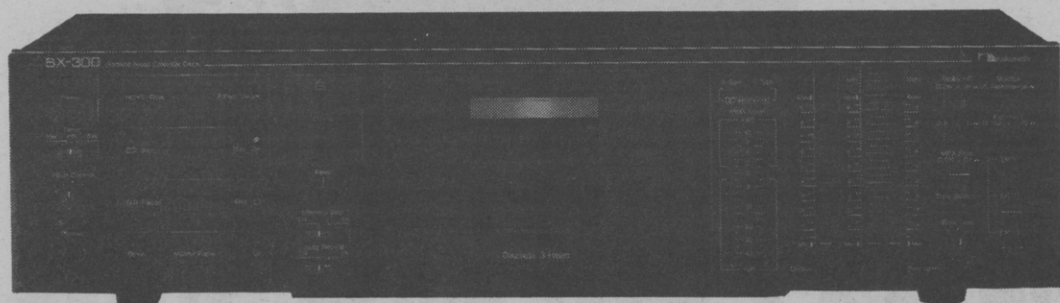
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Knightshade (L-R): Rik Bernards, Jon Bell, Gavin Lind, Wayne Elliot, Alan Grady.



Stonehenge (L-R): Phil Drake, Anton Jelichich, Kevin Farley, Carl Mackie, Ashley Barton.

Two of New Zealand's top metal bands rock the Galaxy on May 14 for a *Radio With Pictures* special. Knightshade's recent EP 'Out for the Count' reached No 28 on the charts. Stonehenge, who toured Australia late last year, brought back with them a new vocalist, Kevin Farley. They'll be returning for more gigs in Australia soon.

AGE OF VOICE

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