

ARDIJAH The Baaddest Sound You'll Hear By Far!



PHOTO BY JOCELYN CARLIN

Ardijah (L-R): Simon Lynch, J.D., Ryan Monga, Betty Monga.

A nightclub by daylight is a desolate place, unnaturally dark. I follow the bubbling bass round some corners and find Ardijah in a wasteland of dismembered equipment, a few preoccupied people and two energetic little boys.

We go upstairs to a window table and Ryan Monga tells the boys to stay on the floor and don't touch the something-or-others. "Yes, Dad." "Yes, Uncle." Meek, obedient small boy bogus. (They did, and they didn't.)

There's a touch of "overnight sensation" to the Ardijah story. Six years residency at Cleopatra's nightclub in Panmure before word leaked out within the music business. Their first single reached No 15 on the charts and featured on a local movie soundtrack.

They promptly won the inaugural Rheineck rock award.

They recorded two tracks of their debut album *Ardijah* with American producer Tony Humecke (Manhattan Transfer, Andy Summers) and were visited in the studio by WEA Los Angeles

talent scout Ruby Morten. Humecke's tracks are indistinguishable from Ardijah bassist Ryan Monga's equally crisp production.

Sophistofunk

Ardijah's polish and professionalism have raised the standard of live

performance in New Zealand by 100 percent. How did they achieve their level of expertise? "Striving for a live sound to sound as if it came off a record," says Ryan. Betty Anne Monga, Ardijah's vocalist, says she's always disappointed by live bands who don't sound anything like their records.

"Some people do their own version of covers, says Ryan. "I think it's a bigger achievement if you can sound like the record — first. Then do your own arrangements."

But they have to keep improving, says keyboardist Simon Lynch. "If you set a standard, you have to stay there, keep it up and get better ..." "In all areas," says Betty. The band has to keep working on their stage performance to keep a fresh impact.

Are they perfectionists? "That's for other people to say," says Ryan.

Betty: "It's more that we're striving for our own individual quality. You can always get better. We're always reworking for that bit more. There are some lines I sing differently live ..."

"If it works better than on record, keep it and keep playing it," says Ryan. "It's just like how an orchestra works, you know, the violin might come in and play one bit — that's arrangement. Lots of bands use, like tambourine, through the whole bracket ("I used to be like that," Betty murmurs) ... In some ways people seem scared to leave any gaps,

they use the tambourine to fill in so there's no gaps. Gaps are an important part of the songs."

Ardijah's arrangements are outstanding for clarity and refinement: adroit, sparse, often syncopated use of the drum machine, overlaid by delicate strokes of synthesiser, combined with the immediate appeal of solid, funky bass, heroic rock guitar flourishes, and Betty Monga's skilfully phrased, soulful vocals.

Jammin'

Live, this band is an exuberant good time. "Ardijah — the baaddest sound you'll hear by far," they sing in their 'Intro' to everybody, including the drum machine. No false claim. They mix their set with ballads and a few very assured covers ('Somebody Else's Guy', 'Which Way is Up' — their way). Their next single 'Time Makes a Wine' is a favourite with an irresistible bass line. The crowd loves 'Give Me Your Number' featuring an incendiary over-the-top guitar finale. And when you're not dancing, listen to the beguiling 'Forever and a Day', simply hung on Betty's voice in lovely harmony with four falling synthesiser notes. Or have a sophisticated romance, Latin American flavoured, with 'Do to You.' (Sigh) They are so stylish.

Ryan writes most of the songs and says they work out the arrangements together: "Someone might come up with a good

ending, we juggle ideas around."

Ardijah has the latest synthesiser equipment to work with, through a cooperative arrangement with the Roland Corporation. Technically, says Simon, they are self taught: "As much as anything it's just having a really good ear. Ryan has completely mastered the drum machine and he's really good at doing arrangements. I'm sort of like a musical mechanic ... I fine tune the sounds. We really work well as a team."

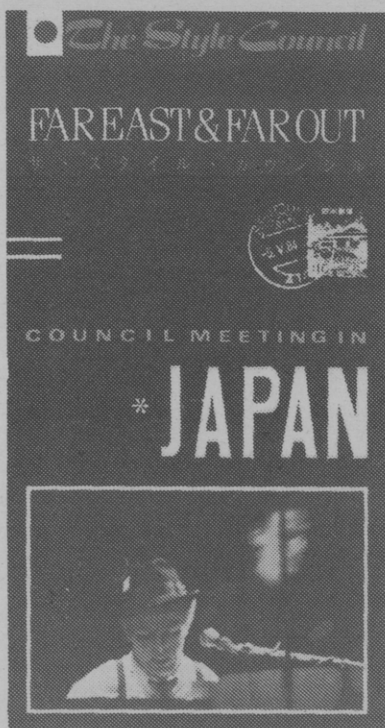
Guitarist John (J D) Diamond has returned to Ardijah after a two-year absence, replacing Tony Nogotautama. He and Ryan started playing together "in a garage about eight years ago." They added a drummer and a singer and formed the first Ardijah. J D, like Simon, writes songs and plays other instruments. He left the band to venture out on his own, working with Billy T James, Tom Sharplin and Tanya Rowles. He says it feels great to be back. "I've done virtually all the clubs in Auckland. This way I can do original stuff."

Clubland

They're all glad to get out of clubland. How does it differ from working independantly? Ryan: In clubs, audiences had to go to you. Now we go to audiences who can't get to us, our sound is heard by a wider audience." It would take a lot of guts, he says,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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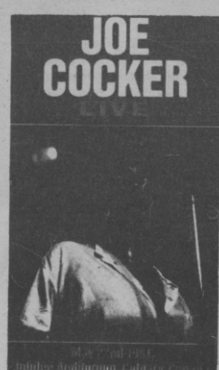


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