

10 YEARS ON

A Look Through Our Back Pages

By CHRIS BOURKE

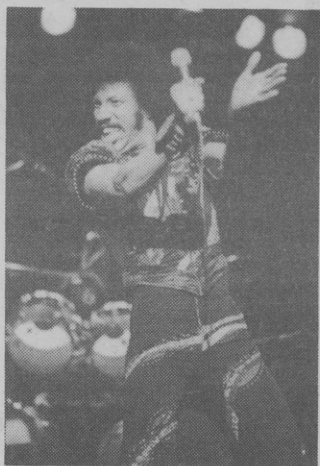
June, 1977: In America, Elvis Presley gives his final concert. In London, police raid a Sex Pistols gig and Johnny Rotten is slashed by a knife-wielding fan. In Wellington, Muldoon begins to assert his power with a controversial SIS bill and a National party old boy for Governor-General. In Auckland, bundles of a new music paper modestly called *Rip It Up* appear on record shop floors.

And so, in this year of anniversaries, it's our turn. On the cover of that first issue, FREE ROCK PAPER in giant letters all but obscured the blurry black-and-white picture of the Commodores. Ten years later, that claim seems taken for granted, but even more extraordinary.

Inside, news of the latest Sex Pistols' exploits were given equal space with changes in 10cc's lineup. For despite what its critics — and fans — might have once thought, *RIU* was never a punk paper. From that Commodores' cover to Ardijah on No 119, all a music paper can really do is reflect the spirit of its age, and hopefully encourage the best of what's available.

From the beginning, that's meant a large proportion of New Zealand content. To those growing up watching television and listening to the radio in the mid-70s, ignorant of *Hot Licks* and Split Enz, it seemed the only local music about was John Hanlon and Mark Williams. *Rip It Up* featured Williams on the cover of its second issue, "How a No 1 Record Doesn't Solve All Your Problems," but the magazine's New Zealand commitment was made easier with the swift growth of live bands and recordings in the wake of Hello Sailor and the DIY punk ethic.

The first issue brought news of the *Hello Sailor* debut album, and the opening of a "new style" of venue, the Island of Real — two significant moments in our recent musical history. Plus, news that Split Enz had recruited



RIU 1: Lionel live.

Neil Finn: "A very talented young lad," wrote Eddie Raynor, "only 18 years old, who we are going to mould and lovingly shape."

At least half-a-dozen waves can be determined by reading 10 years of *Rip It Up*. While the early issues seemed like a continuation of *Hot Licks*, with their championing of Split Enz and Little Feat, they also reflect the conflict in the change to the new order. Rough Justice and Schtung would have to move over for the Scavengers and the Suburban Reptiles. For me, the pivotal moment of transition was the day Auckland's art school punks came to Wellington, when the psuedo-Pistols (the Reptiles) obliterated the psuedo-Santana of Living Force.

But what was punk? *RIU* cub reporter Mike Chunn asked Billy Planet of the Suburban Reptiles: "I don't know," he said. "The



Auckland 'Punks!'

The Scavengers and The Suburban Reptiles
Auckland University Cafe
Saturday 16th July

The dance at the Varsity cafe featuring the Scavengers and the Suburban Reptiles was notable not only for the beer and urine on the floor, but for a more interesting aspect (this is of course based on the long term algorithm) — potential. I'm not talking about the potential of the groups; they have little, and I myself would prefer them to have none. No... there was audience potential, and although on this occasion there were too few people, not enough hot tempers, not enough volume etc. to spark the crowd, it will happen soon.

If you are the sort who is sick of the "Shut up and listen" concerts or the "Oh, how do you do" and "Shirt, Steve, Arm frakin pithed" clubs and pubs, then your presence at a Scavs and Reptiles do is probably what you, and they, need.

The Scavengers are a four piece, the Reptiles a six. The Scavengers were more straightforward, very unpolished, out of tune and hectic. The Reptiles sounded better, were more

together and extraordinarily out of tune. Billy Boots (bass) and Buster Stix (drums) were a pile-driving unit that could go on to greater things. The others suffered from the self-conscious bug but, with a couple of cans on the head, that should sort itself out.

There was one major disappointment. I didn't want to hear songs by the Damned, early Who and Sex Pistols but I got them all, and so any real down-to-earth flavour was lost. With this standard of music, there is no need for cover-versions — stick to your own stuff, lads, as it's more direct and with your confidence should drive through much better. On the by, the music should have been twice as loud... it should have been deafening.

I have one scene that summed up the night for me. A lawyer, from Kōhī, went along to the cafe after a pleasant evening at a Parnell hotel. During the Reptiles, he spat most of his beer on the heads of unfortunates and the beer that did make it to his person was released in a great torrent onto the cafe floor. Aesthetically, it was nothing spectacular — but it had potential.

Mike Chunn RIP IT UP August 1977

Sunday News seems to know what punk is." Jeremy Templer wrote in *RIU* 5: "While punk rock has undoubtedly been accepted as part of a reaction against the mechanical discipline of disco music, its importance lies in its emergence as a marketable fashion. Its password is a surrender to primalism. But this could be the early 60s: the music is once more outrageous, but it's also antagonistic, creating its own tension, dividing, sometimes conquering. And the kids are excited."

First of all, however, punk had to usurp disco, and it was two years before the beast was fought off. As with any genre, disco had its moments, but the monster seemed so gross at the time, it was difficult for the uninitiated to hear them. "I certainly would not knock an album because mention is made of that five-letter word *disco*, or because I cannot boogie," Murray Cammick bravely admitted in issue five.

By September 1978, 140,000

New Zealanders had bought *Saturday Night Fever*, and *RIU* succumbed with a disco special. Francis Stark entered the Double M Disco (now Abby's) for a piece of social anthropology: "The real object doesn't seem to be to dance — instead the people are there to practice social mobility... At the heart of the crowd are those who look like they are waiting for Central Casting to call them up for their role in *Is it Wednesday Yet?*" Writers and musicians picked their disco favourites, Harry Lyon 'Disco Duck', William Dart 'Macho Man', Duncan Campbell 'Flashlight.' Stark picked the ubiquitous 'Boogie Nights' — "I started out putting it on juke boxes to annoy hippies and grew to love it. I even learned the actions off the TV clip."

Despite many live venues turning to discos (a never-ending battle, it seems) by early '78 an upturn in the live scene was noticed. "Auckland's beginning to fill up again with working bands."

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Punk Rock — The New Wave in Godzone

It really fuchs me off the way everybody is saying punk this and punk that when this is one of the first times I've been asked what punk is, to me. And I'm the singer in the Scavs. I mean how can they know until a Punk tells them?

What annoys me the most is the attitude of the Press. I mean specifically those guys from *Rip it Up*. They're going round saying 'oh well I don't know whether we should do anything on Punk'. Oh well fuck it's not their job to decide whether Punk is relevant or if skateboarding is more important, they're supposed to be writing a music paper and Punk is the most important new music to come along in ages. They even told me once that one of their top writers won't do anything on New Zealand bands — I mean, shit — we got some of the best talent around, in New Zealand, it's no wonder they don't get nowhere with a musical press with an attitude like that."

J.F.K.

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