

Spinning Jenny



ANZUS may be stuffed, but CER certainly took off as far as music is concerned. The past year on the local touring circuit has seen the greatest Australian invasion since Gallipoli, though with more success — this month's contingent being the Huxton Creepers and Olympic Sideburns.

Meanwhile, New Zealanders make counter attacks over the Tasman. The latest is from Jenny Morris and Neil Finn.

Taking a break from Crowded House, Finn visited fellow expatriate Morris in Sydney. He sat in her living room and on an acoustic guitar played the chorus and verse of a song he was writing, 'You I Know.' Morris's response was instantaneous: "The minute I head the chorus, I said, That's it! I want it! The first time you hear that song, it affects you."

Australians responded in the

same way — the first four days the song was out there, it sold 4000 copies, and it quickly entered the Top 20. This month Morris's first solo album *Body and Soul* is out, and like the single of the same name, the album emphasises the rocky sound Morris has developed since her year-long stint as INXS's backing vocalist. It also features contributions by many Kiwis in Australia: Neil and Tim

Finn, Dave Dobbyn and Mark Williams.

Do you feel happier with a rock feel rather than the pop of the Crocodiles and QED?

"Music is one of those parts of life that changes," says Morris. "This music I'm doing now is more uptempo, rocky, and that's the sort of music I enjoy doing at the moment, like all the music I've done in the past. This certainly suits my voice at the moment — a rocky country, almost a cross between rock, country and soul."

Little By Little

You've also done some quite slick jazz numbers in the past, like the classic 'Fever' and your own 'Cool.' Any plans to do more?

"Not at the moment, no. I'd eventually like to do all sorts of different albums: country, swing, soul... I think you find a niche for a time and then go on to a different niche." One project she'd like to do however is a country album with her sister Shanley, who sings with Chrome Safari.

"She's got a great country voice. I want to write some songs and be there when she does it. People often ask me if I had any vocal training when I was young — well the only training I had was on long journeys from Hamilton to visit relatives in Wanganui. We'd sing all the way, Mum and Dad and all the kids taking harmonies. We could all sing in tune, which is pretty lucky."

Morris wrote many of the tracks on *Body and Soul*, with her favourites being the title track and a song about advertising, 'Tested Sentences.' "I wrote a song on the last QED album called 'Barbie Doll,' and this is basically about the same thing. One of my little gripes about modern day society is advertising, the insidious way that people go about selling their wares."

So the image-making of the pop business must annoy you?

"No — that doesn't worry me, because if people choose to enjoy music, then they can,

nobody forces you to enjoy music. It's a different thing when you're talking about selling clothes or toothpaste. The way that advertisers go about selling those is saying, 'You won't look any good unless you use our product, you'll look like shit.'

"Whereas music is something that's entertainment, it's not trying to tell you you're a crock of shit if you don't like music. And the visual side of that is all part and parcel of the entertainment, so I don't think there's anything insidious about that, it's just entertaining people."

Going Home

'You I Know,' if it receives the radio play it deserves, should become Morris's first New Zealand hit since the Crocodiles' 'Tears' — while in Australia her songs have regularly charted well. She's understandably disappointed, but philosophical about the lack of support she's received here:

"I've never been into ramming something down people's throats. It's the same as religious factions going door to door trying to make you believe in what they've got. New Zealand has not really been that good for me since I left its shores. I'm pissed off about it because I think it's for the wrong reasons — I don't think it's because of any lack in the music."

"A lot of radio and TV stations have got the wrong idea about giving music to the people. They tend to go with the tried and true, which is pretty sad considering the amount of extremely talented musicians that come out of New Zealand. If New Zealand wants to enjoy my music they can, but if they don't that's their loss, not mine, and so I'm not going to come over there until there's a demand for it."

A New Zealand tour is planned for October of November; Morris is currently touring Australia with her new band of respected but unknown musicians. "I wanted to get a whole bunch of fresh new players, I wanted a spark of life."

Neither of the two 60s' songs

Morris had Australian hits with — Dusty's 'Little By Little' and Nancy Sinatra's 'Jackson' (a duet with Michael Hutchence) — are in the show, and she's coy about any plans to join the current wave of re-issues. Why all the re-makes, where are the song-writers? "I think good songs will always be sung, it's as simple as that," she says. "That's the reason we can sit down and listen to Frank Sinatra

singing 'I've Got You Under My Skin' or 'Black Magic' and still love it."

Already this year two superbly affecting local ballads have become standards, 'You Oughta Be in Love' and 'Don't Dream It's Over' — and if 'You I Know' is given its due, it too should enter the nation's consciousness. Better the devil you know ...

Chris Bourke

After a while, Crocodile

...

Composer/keyboardist Peter Dasent seems a bit bashful about his credentials in NZ rock.

His press kit refers only fleetingly to the Crocodiles, it disguises the innovative rock band Spats as a "music/theatre ensemble," and fails to mention at all the memorable theme music he wrote for that Kiwi rock institution *Radio With Pictures*.

Perhaps though it's unreasonably parochial to focus on Dasent's New Zealand past. After all, he left for Sydney six years ago and his work since then has moved well beyond the confines of the rock field, as his latest project demonstrates.

He's back in New Zealand this month with *Intensive Care*, a theatre/dance piece composed by Dasent and choreographed by Paul Jenden. It will be performed by Jenden and dancer Christina Asher, with live music by Dasent

and vocalist Tony Backhouse.

Dasent and Backhouse go back to the Crocodiles and beyond. In 1981, after considerable success with the single 'Tears' and two albums, the Crocodiles made the traditional trans-Tasman trek. And like many that had gone before, they broke up.

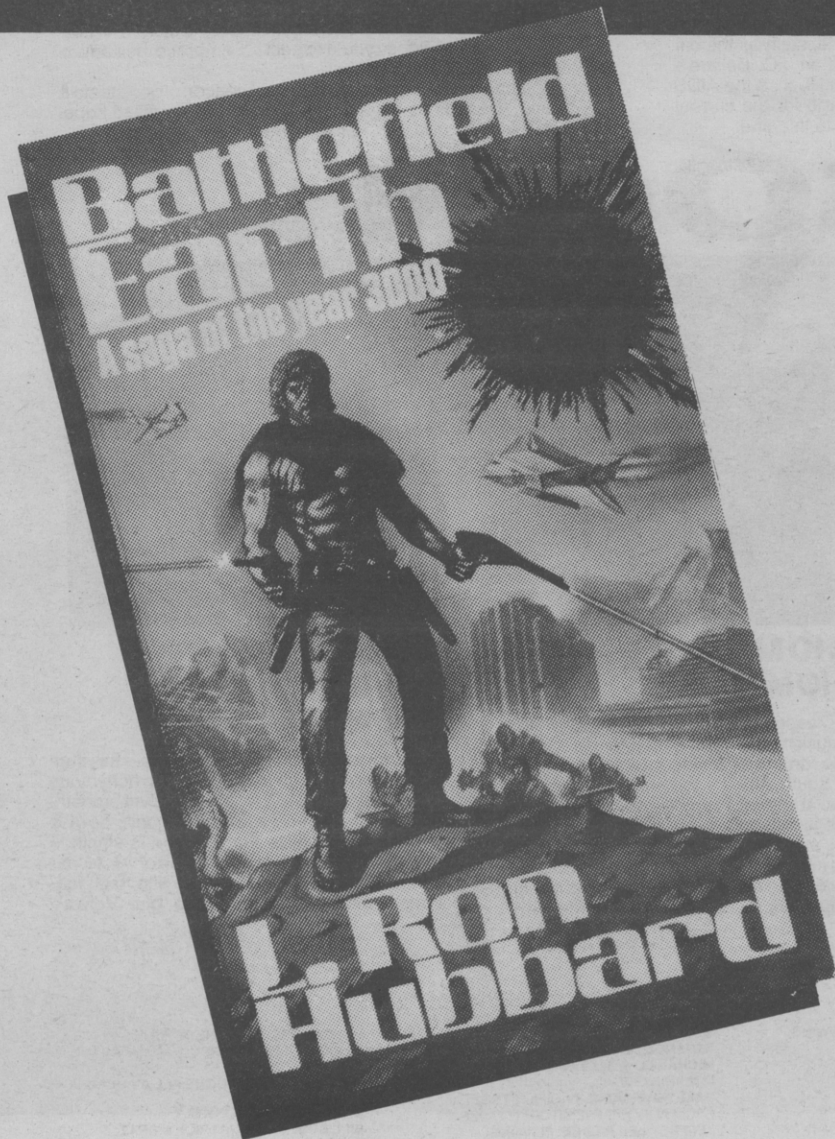
While Morris embarked on her solo career, Tony Backhouse and Croc's bassist Jonathon Zwartz formed the Vulgar Beatmen. Dasent meanwhile enrolled at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney and spent two years studying jazz and exploring his own compositions. During this time he formed jazz quartet Le Combo, while keeping one foot in the rock world recording with I Am Joe's Music, strictly a studio band

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Peter Dasent

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