



Hunters Bold

It is refreshing to talk to someone in the music industry who has a keen sense of the real.

Hunters and Collectors have been going for some seven years now, and unlike many other bands, they refuse to accept the ordinary and the easy. New directions and new stimuli are of prime concern: this tribe doesn't want to fade away.

I catch Mark Seymour, singer/guitarist/songwriter, in the Melbourne office of Mushroom Records. The band, he tells me, is having a much needed break after a long tour of the States and a 25-day bash in the recording studios of LA. This month they will be in New Zealand to promote their new album *What's a Few Men* with an eight-date tour, south to north.

The present lineup of the band has been intact for three years now — how does this affect the band, musically and professionally?

"Everyone's being pretty accomodating towards everybody else in the band," says Seymour. "So when we start going through a new phase, or, if I get a particular notion in my head or a style I want to pursue, the band is fairly amiable in that respect. We have learnt how to cooperate so we have been able to make the transition from one period of our career to the next."

Hunters' music is based in the early 70s hard rock ...

"... Our music is quite anachronistic in some respects," says Seymour. "We recall a

lot of Stones, Faces, the Animals, white R&B ... the first time I met John Archer, the bass player, we were swapping Keith Richards' riffs on the floor of a college room!"

Whitewash

While the name Hunters and Collectors has aboriginal connections, Seymour — who regards the Australian bicentennial as being a bit of a whitewash — makes it clear that his and the band's roots are "White middle class Australian ... the impression that the name Hunters and Collectors gives is one like a community or a team. One of the things of the Melbourne culture has been this real strong suburban identification with football teams ... I have always tried to represent the band as a symbol of a community or environment."

"Me and the tribe, we all belong together Sunday is coming but the weeks go on forever."

— 'Faraway Man.'

Hunters and Collectors' last album *Human Frailty* expressed an awareness of the negativity in the world. Now, Seymour says he's "intrigued by the day-to-day psychology of peoples' relationship with money."

Is this an expansion of the attitude towards television expressed on *Frailty*?

"TV is a dead-end street, definitely boring — I get my creative sustenance from day-to-day experience," says Seymour. "TV is one thing amongst a whole range of phenomenon that affect people in their daily lives ... so people are injecting all this stuff, and the way they interact with each other as a result of all this is what I'm interested in."

"I spy a humble home, I see the tea-towels fly

In a blinding flash I see the years go by Memories twisted around somebody's finger."

— 'Do You See What I See?'

Psychodrama

The new album *What's a Few Men* is a fine mix of rock and ballad, but, says Seymour, "There is a political side to that too, the larger audience you get the more intense it is, there is a psychological drama you are putting into a live audience. Lots of sweat and booze, people get pretty intense — we learnt over a period of time to back-step a little, put in a few soft songs to bring the audience down a little, and give them time to breathe."

Greg Edwards, who has previously worked with REM and John Cougar Mellencamp, has managed to take their distinctive live energy to vinyl. How was Edwards to

work with?

"Pretty brash, with a butcher-in-a-china shop mentality," says Seymour. "But when it came to recording he was incredibly sensitive, like what he said was, 'You guys get into the studio and you start getting too serious, but the basic energy you have is quite instinctive. It shouldn't be masked by your own intellectualisation'."

On the whole Seymour is very pleased with the end result. The raw energy is alive and there is a thematic unity to the album. The recording process itself was very quick, the mixing evolving as the songs were composed, rather than putting down the tracks and re-thinking the entire sound at the mixing stage. "It was a fairly organic process," he says, "It came out as we played the songs."

The album could be the breakthrough commercially — how do you feel about that?

"One of the big things arising for the Hunters and Collectors is crossing over into the mainstream, you know, walking that thin tight-rope between commercial success and artistic and self-credibility ..."

But with that there is a certain amount of cynicism towards that old devil "fortune and fame":

"I don't believe in the populist myth of being able to capture the public's imagination and suddenly everything goes wild — there's so much back room politicking that goes on between band managers and record companies and media ... so many variables involved that you can't really predict success."

"My gut feeling is that I don't see Hunters and Collectors as a household name."

Squalor

Britain has yet to be conquered by Hunters and Collectors, something often discussed in interviews. Their manager is currently negotiating a UK/Europe release. The last time the band toured there, two members left, and now Seymour is hesitant due to "the amount of compromise you have to make, in terms of the quality of life. In order to live in England you have to eat badly, live in squalor, and your skin sort of starts peeling off."

"Unless you're part of the six percent of the most privileged aristocracy in the world then you can't live to anywhere near the degree of health and self-respect as you can in Australia. We decided it wasn't worth it. Our music isn't so commercial that it's going to automatically shoot up the British radio pop

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