



Martha Davis on THE MOTELS

A few years ago, the Motels were just another LA band, playing the clubs and looking for the break. Unlike the majority of those bands, the Motels got their break. It came in the form of a steamy ballad called 'Total Control'. Strangely enough, the song did nothing in their native USA, but scored heavily in the rest of the world. Making the most of this, they are on a heavy touring schedule, which landed them at Auckland Airport last week.

The press conference, in the house bar of the Mon Desir, showed the Motels to be surprised at the attention they commanded. The presentation of their two gold albums demonstrated their lack of familiarity with such proceedings. With this, and the obligatory TV interview, out of the way, I cornered lead singer and songwriter Martha Davis and spoke to her about progress so far.

In their present form, the Motels have been in business since January 1979. It was the time when America was waking up to the reality of the 'New Wave'. I asked Martha if the advent of the new wave had helped their progress.

"It had a great deal to do with it. In a way, though, it wasn't the new wave as opposed to the punk movement. I got to watch the record companies in LA react. The first few albums to drift through sent shivers up their spines, and they tried to laugh it off with 'Oh, this will never catch on.' Then they decided, 'Well, maybe it will catch on,' and then they all ran around in circles trying to find bands to sign. Up until then, the LA scene had been really complacent and the only people making records were

bands like the Eagles and the Doobie Brothers. It was like someone threw a wrench in the works and it shook them up to the point where it opened a lot of doors for a whole lot of musicians who had been frustrated throughout that period."

Demo-lition

Just prior to the real awakening of the LA Scene, Martha disbanded the original Motels in the belief that they were perhaps too punky to get a deal. "It was about six or eight months later that the new Motels were signed," she shrugs. "By then we were much more musical, so we got labelled new wave. It was all quite funny when you consider that some of our songs were five or six years old."

The period in which the Motels started making it was preceded by the hey-day of those god-awful Beatles clones, the Knack. Did the Knack's success have anything to do with all these signings?

"Not really. It was pre-Knack that the majority of the signings happened. Dean Chamberlain, the original Motels guitarist was actually working for Warners when the first ripples of what was to come happened. That is how we made our first demo tape. He went to them and said, 'I need to borrow some money from your finance division to make a demo.' And they said, 'Are you ready to make a demo?' He, of course, said, 'Yes. That's why we want to do it.' Their response was, 'We'll pay for it, and you demo for us.' When they heard it they decided to pass."

When in Rome

Every band needs a hot song to perform live. For the Motels it was, and seems always will be 'Total Control'. "It has always had an amazing response live," reflects Martha, "Even in really out-of-the-way places. There is even an Italian version out. I'm frantically trying to learn the words in Italian before we go to Rome."

The reason for 'Total Control' not taking off in the States becomes clearer as Martha attempts to explain. "It was never definite from the start that it would be the single. What has happened in the States is different regional hits. I think maybe it is because we are reasonably diverse, but different songs seemed to suit different places. It all makes things a little difficult, and I think it has contributed to a lack of national success in the States."

Although none of them hail from LA, they still see themselves as part of the LA scene. "It's nice to go home to that camaraderie," says Martha. "The only thing is that you are away for so long that when you get back all the bands have changed. LA is still run by the industry. Right now the industry is in pretty bad shape. Record counterfeiting has cost it millions. When the companies feel that much of a blow, they stop signing people up."

Last Year's Ferrari

The climate of the moment, however, seems to be favouring the Motels. Their recently-

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The Jacksons, 'TRIUMPH'

Considering the huge success of Michael Jackson's 'Off the Wall' the Jacksons were faced with a challenge. 'Triumph' is written and produced by the Jacksons. The album showcases the individual and collective talents of the Jacksons — Randy, Jackie, Michael, Tito and Marlon.

The first hit single is 'Lovely One'.