

Flying the Coup

Coup D'Etat — A violent or illegal change in government according to the book, pronounced *Coo Datah*. The band has an album set for release in January. They produced it themselves. The film clips you've seen on TV are another DIY production. "A poor man's band," Jan Preston says.

Coup D'Etat have been around since March. Jan and bass player Neil Hannan came from New York where they'd been with Red Mole. There are no regrets about the move. Both look upon it as inevitable, being musicians rather than actors they aimed for the satisfaction of full time playing, forming a band which started out light-hearted about fun, but which is now serious about getting it across.

When Jan and Neil were in the States with Red Mole they kept up performances with the Shaky Islanders. This also provided an alternative source of income, and perhaps a base for the current Coup D'Etat.

Harry Lyon on guitar and vocals came from Hello Sailor, and drummer Paul Dunningham was recruited after drummer number one, Steve Osbourne, left the group. Radio stations and record companies are stirring to 'Doctor I Like Your Medicine', Harry's song, and people are whistling it, proof of response ... and something Coup D'Etat's aiming for.

Expansion

In retrospect, both Jan and Neil think they could've stayed in the States and made it, but the prospect of a Red Mole tour here, and a possible excursion to the South Pacific Arts Festival in Papua New Guinea drew them back home. Now they're here without manager, and without producer, but with Polygram's backing. Problems they share with other bands crop up over and over again.

One is the restriction of playing pubs. You're limited to a 45 minute set, after which you stop, let people drink, and see the breweries walk away with all the profit, while the band hardly covers costs.

Neil Hannan comments, "We had an agent book the tour for us, and it was all done through pubs, nothing creative as far as schools, or halls go."

"I think we should've gone to the South Island after the tour, even though we'd be about ten thousand dollars in debt by now. It would have been worth it in that more people would've heard the band, although it would have cost us to go and play for them, but we got scared off because we're badly in debt now."

"We have to look elsewhere. It's the survival factor, I mean the show we're putting on now we can hardly afford to do."

There are tentative plans for an Australian tour in March, Neil continues, "We have to move into a bigger, more established market where people are used to paying five dollars to go and see a band. Here we still get complaints about a three dollar door charge, and it's just unrealistic."



Coup D'Etat (L-R) Jan Preston, Harry Lyon, Paul Dunningham & Neil Hannan.

Jan points out the US system, works well, giving bands an incentive, and a chance to earn a living by handing over 10% of the bar takings for the evening or afternoon.

Neil says, "Australia to me is just a bigger version of what we do here, and I don't find it very stimulating. I want to go to Japan, there's a lot of people there interested in the sort of music we play."

There is also an Auckland film crew interested in filming the phenomena of a rock band in Japan, and the chance of tying the tour in with it.

Organisation

Neil says the band is going to need a manager for an international venture.

And Jan says "We'd love to have a manager if the right person came along, and if we could afford it. It's the same with a producer."

"We can't afford to pay one, and unless it is the exact person, who understands what you're doing, it's a waste of time and money. As far as production goes, I think we're learning by our mistakes. Of course we'd love to have David Tickle (with Split Enz to his credit) come over and re-mix our tracks, but one, we're on a limited budget, and two, Coup D'Etat is getting better at producing."

Neil adds, "It's certainly trial and error."

"Polygram is taking just as much of a gamble as we are. They're prepared to put some money into us, and see how the records go."

"But we probably won't be wanting to produce our second album," Jan says, "We're very distrusting of anybody in rock and roll, and as far as the music goes I think you have to keep control."

Neil is positive, "We're not making any apologies for our production, because it's getting better fast, and I think it was worth it to people like Polygram to have taken a risk. However, we do need to work with a good producer just to learn more ourselves. I think one fault with recording in New Zealand is we just don't get a big enough sound. I don't know why because all the gear's there."

Jan agrees, "Recording is limited here. The gear's there, but the producers aren't. And you know you sound as good as any overseas bands, but not on record, because you're not produced as well. I reckon you can always tell New Zealand. There are few tracks which rate with say a Bowie, or Blondie production."

Commitment

Their recent North Island tour has helped consolidate the band, and it appears they'll make it or break it together.

"The success of your band, and how the

band is communicating is very, very, important," Jan says.

"If you're just grinding along year after year, but not really getting through to people, it doesn't matter how well you get on, or how creative you are — you can't keep going."

"And there's the other extreme of course, when a band is going across well, even though there may be internal tensions. And there'll always be tension in any group of people doing anything together. But ... we really want to stick together. I mean, you have to admire bands like Split Enz, who have stuck together, or a core of them at least, through thick and thin, and now they're into the thick, and good on them!"

Direction

One of Neil's ambitions is to make it out of New Zealand, but he's skeptical of being able to do it right now.

"I'd like to have a recording success from here, but it seems pretty impossible economically at the moment."

Jan reinforces the view on the home front. "We're kiwis you know, we don't want to go careering. We want to play our music to our people, in our environment."

"I think things are slowly changing, but there's still the attitude of all the good bands being the ones you see on TV, and the ones you buy records of, while the ones you go and see, are kiwi bands. And this is where we're probably up ourselves in the worst possible way, but we've played in America, in Britain. Neil and Harry have played in Australia, Paul's never been out of the country, but we know good musicians and good music are the same where ever or what ever the source is."

Both Jan and Neil reject the possibility of being upstaged by younger musicians.

"It's a question of a energy, not of youth, and there's no substitute for energy, and experience. It's not a matter of being upstaged. If they're that good they'll respect you, and you'll respect them no matter how old they are," Neil says.

"Some younger bands criticize us for being middleclass but it's crap," Jan adds. "I'd like to see the bands pit their energies against the breweries, the people who take the profits, instead of each other. But the law is for the younger bands to do anything to get a chance to play, like sticking a poster on top of someone else's current one."

Neil intercepts — "If you did that in New York, someone would come and slit your throat. It's not done."

And Jan goes on, "It'd be good if they got together and approached Kicks, for example, about a decent PA, or a good jug of orange juice instead of having to pay 80 cents for a glass of coke. There is so much which could be changed, but it's every man for himself and in a very small time way."

Maybe it's time for a revolution.

Ann Louise Martin

FLEETWOOD MAC

LIVE

wea

GO YOUR OWN WAY

OH WELL

NOT THAT FUNNY

NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN

I'M SO AFRAID

LANDSLIDE

MONDAY MORNING

RHIANNON

ONE MORE NIGHT

DREAMS

AGAIN

SAY YOU LOVE ME

DON'T LET ME DOWN AGAIN

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER

FIREFLIES

OVER MY HEAD

DON'T STOP

OVER & OVER

SARA

AGAIN

DAUGHTER

HARMON RECORDS INC.