

# Flowers' Iva Davies Interview

Flowers' frontman Iva Davies is roughly 24 years old, slight of build, thin of features, pale of skin. He's very hard to catch out of his totally black ensemble and (offstage) without his dark glasses. Couple this with the sombre atmosphere of the *Icehouse* album, and you have a picture of a moody introvert.

Davies, while being an affable sort with a ready smile, tends to agree:

"I definitely am a quiet type, generally, and I find that I'm portraying myself in the songs I write. Your average rock'n'roll audience doesn't usually like it, when people become introspective. They prefer '1, 2, 3 go!' and that's it."

"But any kind of motivation can be used, and I definitely feel that that kind of negative feeling is stronger and more immediate than any positive feeling. It's much easier to feel pain than it is to feel elation. It's more direct."

The darker, lonelier side of the human psyche is a strong feature of Davies' music, the result of his having to shut himself away to write.

"It's impossible to do anything while we're touring and generally, the only way I've managed to write anything is to physically lock myself up for four days or so, and just not leave a room. 'Icehouse' was basically produced at the end of one of those four-day binges. I'm easily distracted and I lack discipline, but I hope that will come with a bit of practice."

## Oboe Origins

Yet discipline should hardly be alien to Davies, at least not musically. He trained in classical music, studying oboe at Sydney's Conservatorium of Music, along with a number of other instruments, including piano and brass, which he confesses he was never really able to master.

He played oboe with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for a time, and appeared set on a classical career. He supplemented his income by transcribing pop songs onto manuscript on a freelance basis for various publishing houses. Yet surprisingly, he refuses to put Flowers' songs on paper.

"It's more sort of aggravation value, really. I could never be bothered going into the pains. I've never bothered to write our songs out, because it's wasted effort. The band don't really read (music), so there's no advantage in writing it out. Once they're recorded, I'd rather pay somebody to do that."

## Bolan Freak

Davies was seduced by rock'n'roll at a fairly late stage in life, and began frantically buying up old T Rex singles, as well as the work of David Bowie and Lou Reed. Later would come Brian Eno and Ultravox.

The turning point came when he met the Flowers' present bass player, Keith Welsh, who wanted to buy some gear he had for sale.

The two got together with a guitarist and drummer, and at the tender age of 21, Davies bought his first electric guitar, which he didn't even know how to play.

They started out in the pubs of North Bondi, playing cover versions of local and overseas hits for \$60 a night, and taking a lot of flak from aggressive publicans. But the crowds liked them, and Davies kept learning to play guitar. The second guitarist was replaced by a keyboard player, who co-wrote some of the songs on *Icehouse* before leaving to study piano. His replacement, Anthony Smith, was recruited through a trade advertisement, while drummer John Lloyd was discovered by Cameron Allan, co-director of Regular Records and co-producer of *Icehouse*. Lloyd was drumming with a Melbourne band, the Dots. Allan is an old mate of Davies' from the conservatorium days, and recommended Lloyd, who subsequently joined, to bring the band to its current lineup.

## Dirty Pool

That was 18 months ago, and then along came a man who gave Flowers, and especially Iva Davies, the impetus they needed to start producing more of their own music.

"When we first got a keyboard player we were still doing an entirely covers set and were pretty smalltime in the pubs in Sydney. The crunch came when we were approached by Dirty Pool, who manage the Angels, Cold Chisel and Mental As Anything."

Ray Hern, mainstay of Dirty Pool, was the man who put the pressure on.

"Before then, we only really approached it as a kind of hobby, and it was at that point that I got put on the spot. Hern said we weren't going to get anywhere unless we started writing songs. I'd never really been the naturally creative type, and as it's happened since then, I never produce anything unless I'm put in a pressure situation. But it seems that it always works for me, and I enjoy being put on a spot, because it makes me do these things, and it's really gratifying when you do them. Otherwise I just wouldn't put myself through the pains of doing it."

However, there was no pressure to get something on record. The band didn't go into the studio until it had the songs ready, and had a reputation as a live act. Davies feels this time

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

It's that time again. Printed below are our writers' favourite albums, fav 45 and most underrated album of 1980. And it is also time for 'Rip It Up' readers to vote for best group (XTC again?), best vocalist (Bowie again?), best NZ album of 1980 etc.

Vote now, post your favs to 'RIU' Readers' Poll, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1. Note that independent scrutineers will count the votes and detect any attempt to rig the poll.

## Duncan Campbell

Clash *Sandinista!*, *Specials*, Bruce Springsteen *The River*, Tom Waits *Heart-attack And Vine*, Talking Heads *Remain in Light*.

45: Police, 'Don't Stand Too Close To Me'. Underrated: Judie Tzuke, *Welcome To The Cruise*.

## Roy Colbert

Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen *The River*, Toy Love, the Cramps *Songs The Lord Taught Us*, Joy Division *Unknown Pleasures*. 45: Toy Love, 'Don't Ask Me/I Sheep'. Underrated: Dire Straits, *Making Movies*.

## Simon Grigg

Toy Love, Dexy's Midnight Runners *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*, The Beat *Just Can't Stop It*, Linton Kwesi Johnson *Bass Culture*, Talking Heads *Remain In Light*, Jam *Setting Sons*. 45: Jam, 'Going Underground'. Underrated: Jah Wobble, *Betrayal*.

## George Kay

David Bowie *Scary Monsters*, Clash *London Calling*, Jam *Setting Sons*, Talking Heads *Remain In Light*, XTC *Black Sea*. 45: Jam, 'Going Underground'. Underrated: Magazine, *Correct Use Of Soap*.

## Mark Phillips

The Beat *Just Can't Stop it*, Magazine *Correct Use Of Soap*, Joy Division *Closer*, Jam *Setting Sons*, David Bowie *Scary Monsters*. 45: Jam, 'Going Underground'. Underrated: *The Birthday Party*.

## Murray Cammick

Magazine *Correct Use Of Soap*, Les Plus Grands *Success De Chic*, Bruce Springsteen *The River*, Dexy's Midnight Runners *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*, B. B. King *Take It Home*. 45: Smokey Robinson, 'Cruisin'. Underrated: Ellen Foley, *Nightout*.

## Ken Williams

Jo Jo Zep *Hats Off Step Lively*, Crusaders *Rhapsody And Blues*, Alberta Hunter *Amtrak Blues*, Eric Clapton *Just One Night*, Pete Townshend *Empty Glass*.

# Flowers' poll

- group
- album
- single
- new artist
- vocalist
- enzed group
- nz album
- nz single
- nz vocalist
- new nz artist
- nz drummer
- nz guitarist
- nz bassist
- nz keyboards
- fav concert

Post to Rip It Up Readers' Poll, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1, by Feb 28. Read March 9 RIU for results.

TICK ADAM ANT & CIRCLE HIS FOUR (SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT) FRIENDS. SIX READERS WILL WIN ADAM AND THE ANTS 'KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER' ALBUM, FEATURING 'ANT MUSIC', 'DOGEAT DOG', 'ANT INVASION', ETC.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

POST TO R.I.U., P.O. BOX 5689 AUCKLAND, BY FEB 28.



EVERY ONE

12

INCHES

OF FUN

