

The Independent Associates



John Murphy



Michael Dempsey



Billy McKenzie



Alan Rankine

By the time you read this the Associates may have been evicted from their London flat.

Michael Dempsey, bassist, met Scotsmen Billy McKenzie (vocals) and Alan Rankine (guitar), the Associates, two years ago while he was with the Cure and helped them out on an occasional basis. Last year along with drummer John Murphy he joined as a permanent member.

Michael Dempsey

"We want to avoid big record companies," explains Dempsey on the phone from London, "and stay out of the music machine, the business side."

The band shun outside control and restriction in favour of independence, spontaneity and a certain degree of self-imposed lethargy. But there's a price to pay:

"We haven't got anything planned. We're gonna get thrown out of our flat next week, that's the only certainty that seems to exist at the moment. We're frantically scrambling for money."

Dempsey didn't appear on the band's debut album, *The Affectionate Punch*, because McKenzie and Rankine wanted it to be "spontaneous" so there was little time to accommodate Dempsey. But now he's more at home with them than he was with the Cure:

"We're suited in some ways but not in others. You always have to compromise because nobody is the same as you but sooner or later you find a match which is better for your own self. And my bass playing style has changed quite a bit really but it's not a change I regret. It's a completely different feel."

McKenzie and Rankine have little time for rock'n'roll so I presumed Dempsey and Murphy would provide those aspects:

"I don't think so, I hope not."

Derek Reid

The familiar sounds of a Scots' accent. Derek Reid is the new member, the fifth Associate and their first keyboards' player. And that's quite a story:

"I don't know anything about keyboards because I've never played them before which I think will be an advantage. I'll be doing keyboards' fills. You could probably go on a piano and pick up something that was really catchy and we're working that way and it feels really good, it's quite original. I don't know piano chords but I can play piano, y'know what I mean? It'll be fresh. I'll double up on bass with Michael and maybe have two of us playing bass at the same time and give it more of a

dancing feel."

Reid is an old school friend and he shares the Associates' distaste for mainstream rock'n'roll, whatever that is. I asked him why the band wanted keyboards:

"The band was getting a bit rocky and that's the last thing that we want. If you want to do anything new then you've got to get away from that."

Billy McKenzie

Vocalist and Associates' focal point, McKenzie, is impossible to categorise. A Bowie fan, selectively, his influences range from Yugoslavian folk to film music and beyond. Rock isn't in it:

"I just don't like that type of music, the reason being that it didn't do anything for us. I'm talking about things like ... what's that band that did 'Free Bird'? (pause) Lynyrd Skynyrd. All that type of rock'n'roll to me babbled on about a lot of trash. It was just quite meaningless for someone like myself in the town that I stayed and the situation that I was in. It wasn't very colourful and there wasn't any imagination in it whereas film music, Mantovani and that type of music, Billie Holiday and great sixties' pop songs stretched your imagination a bit. Rock'n'roll was a little bit too enclosed and beer swigging."

The Affectionate Punch is a debut album that most bands could only dream of making. It has so much depth, strength and beauty, and yet with the exception of the four-and-a-half-years' old 'Transport to Central', the album was written and recorded "on the spot" over a two month period. McKenzie was responsible for some of the music and all of the lyrics:

"My lyrics come in a type of non-literary manner. I never think about them, they just come all in a bundle. They're not calculated, they're not really thought out. I get them on the spur of the moment and generally about eighty per cent of them within an hour."

So what was he trying to say through his obtuse lyrics?

"Well a lot of people maybe get hysterical through lots of different situations and aggravations. In the lyrics I was hopefully very helpful to some people that might be a little bit disturbed as I had gone through certain emotional feelings and I was hoping that they'd get a little bit of strength out of it. Basically the album was about things that most people find annoying. Just basic general things like greed and selfishness."

The Associates contain important elements of drama and emotion, which, in the live situation, must be difficult to communicate:

"Well it isn't really because of the type of person I am. I can show key emotions very, very easy and I'm not afraid to do so. I do it through a glance or a twist to the face, a gesture or a movement. People in general dramatise every day."

Independence

The Associates have a fierce independence that seems to be a crucial characteristic in the general resurgence of Scots' bands:

"Yeh, it just seems that most Scottish bands have been let out of the zoo because Scotland has always been viewed as zooland, ant-like animals under English superiority. And the English don't like it at all because their music's very bad at the moment. Viva La Scotia."

McKenzie described the English as "snotty and elitist" in their attitude to Scots' bands and he has no sympathy with record companies either:

"We're only difficult because record companies don't get all their own way with us. So they can lump it too."

At the moment the Associates are trying to set up their own label, Pfaff Records. "We hope it's an inspiration for some other young people who've been knocked about."

They've left Fiction and their new EP will be released on another independent label, Situation Two. The new EP will be the first in a series of forty-fives that they hope to release in the present year and we should see it here through Stunn and CBS.

The attitude of doing things their way is practical idealism at work. They're not making money and there's a no-compromise code here that is definitely for real. With eviction pending.

And you thought times were hard here?

George Kay

Poll Results!

Group

1 CLASH. 2 Jam. 3 Joy Division. 4 Police. 5 = Split Enz/XTC.

Album

1 SETTING SONS. Jam. 2 = London Calling, Clash/Seventeen Seconds, Cure. 4 True Colours, Split Enz. 5 = Scary Monsters, Bowie/River, Bruce Springsteen.

Single

1 'GOING UNDERGROUND', Jam. 2 'Holiday In Cambodia', Dead Kennedys. 3 'A Forest', Cure. 4 'Mirror In The Bathroom', Beat. 5 = 'I Got You', Split Enz/Whip It', Devo.

New Artist

1 DEAD KENNEDYS. 2 Echo & the Bunnymen. 3 The Beat. 4 Adam & the Ants. 5 Dexy's Midnight Runners.

Vocalist

1 DAVID BOWIE. 2 = Bruce Springsteen/Sting. 4 Howard Devoto. 5 = Ian Curtis/Elvis Costello.

NZ Group

1 SPLIT ENZ. 2 Toy Love. 3 Pop Mechanix. 4 Swingers. 5 Pink Flamingos. 6 Newz.

NZ Album

1 TOY LOVE, Toy Love. 2 True Colours, Split Enz. 3 = Dave McCartney & The Pink Flamingos/Hammond Gamble. 5 = AK.79/Lip Service.

NZ Single

1 'DON'T ASK ME', Toy Love. 2 'Ritz', Pop Mechanix. 3 'Features Exposed', Features. 4 = 'One Good Reason', Swingers/'One Step Ahead', Split Enz/'Bride Of Frankenstein', Toy Love/'Virginia', Dave McCartney & Pink Flamingos.

NZ Vocalist

1 CHRIS KNOX. 2 = Tim Finn/Andrew Snoid. 3 = Dave McCartney/Phil Judd. 5 = Hammond Gamble/Steve Gilpin.

New NZ Artist

1 SCREAMING MEEMES. 2 Dave McCartney & Pink Flamingos. 3 Pop Mechanix. 4 Penknife Glides. 5 = Gordons/Newmatics.

NZ Drummer

1 MIKE DOOLEY. 2 Brent Eccles. 3 = Mal Green/Buster Stiggs. 5 = Peter Warren/Frank Gibson Jr.

NZ Guitarist

1 PHIL JUDD. 2 Neil Finn. 3 Hammond Gamble. 4 = Dave McCartney/Alec Bathgate.

NZ Bassist

1 BONES HILLMAN. 2 Paul Kean. 3 Mike Chunn. 4 Chris Orange. 5 Paul Scott.

NZ Keyboards

1 EDDIE RAYNER. 2 Jane Walker. 3. Paul Hewson. 4 = Murray Burns, Jan Preston, Mark Stanton.

Fav Concert/Tour

1 CURE. 2 Ramones. 3 XTC. 4 Magazine. 5 Tom Pettv

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DON'T FOLLOW ME, I'M LOST TOO

PEARL HARBOUR

DON'T FOLLOW ME, I'M LOST TOO

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BRIAN ENO DAVID BYRNE

MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS

SIRE

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