



Last year, on Auckland's, North Shore, it seemed as though every available garage housed a budding pop group. Of the bands that emerged that year, one stands head and shoulders above the rest. With tracks on two compilation albums, and a single shared with the Newmatics, the Screaming Meemees are well on their way to success.

In the absence of lead singer, Tony Drumm, we talked to the band about their Ripper Records' single. Guitarist Mike O'Neil explains the choice of song.

"We did 'Can't Take It' because we wanted to save other material for a single we are doing with Propeller. We had the melody for the song, but the lyrics and piano parts were written in the studio prior to recording. You have to give credit to Steve Kennedy, the engineer, for doing such a fine job.

"When we did 'See Me Go' the first time, we thought it was great. But after we heard it a week later, we changed our minds. It didn't appear to have any relevance to the song live. That's why we have recorded it again for Pro-

pellor. This time it's on twenty-four track and produced by Andrew Snoid."

Drummer Joh interjects. "Doug Rogers (of Harlequin) likes the song so much that he let us record it again the following day for nothing: the idea being to do an edited radio version."

All the Meemees write.

"It usually starts with one person's idea," says Mike. "We work around each others' thoughts, so consequently we write a heap of songs. Sometimes we work on a song for two or three practices, then throw it away."

Joh defends the band against accusations of stealing hooks from old songs. "It's so hard to be totally original. Let's face it — everyone borrows, it's just a case of how good your sources are. Ours tend to be a mixture of several songs rather than one. Most of the time we don't worry about it."

Like most young bands, the Meemees face a constant struggle for gigs. There was a time when they played only at parties and North Shore dances. Recently, though, they seem to have been breaking away from their fellow northerners.

"Most of the other bands are at varsity or tech. We channelled our time into music," says Joh.

Mike continues. "We are proud of where we come from, even though we are starting to leave it behind. What we are trying to do is to get those other bands our support gigs. We still

play North Shore dances when we can."

Another Meemees' recording project is an eight song cassette.

"We've got heaps of songs that people like, but we've got sick of playing them. Rather than just throw them away, we decided it would be good to put them on a tape. It works out cheaper than two singles. By the time it is released, we will have ceased to play most of the songs."

"One side of it might be live," adds Joh. "We haven't decided yet. It might also include some covers. 'Twist and Shout' and 'Louie Louie' are possibilities. We see it as the closest we can get to an album for the time being."

The Screaming Meemees will be touring quite extensively in the next two months, including two weeks in Christchurch. Watch out!

Mark Phillips



Five Newmatics

Contrary to popular belief, the Newmatics are not a ska band. Their fusion of various influences can't be labelled.

Over the last six months, the band have gradually built up a rock steady following that finds them instantly accessible. A throbbing rhythm section of Ben Staple on drums and bassist Jeff Smith is the perfect platform for Simon Clark's sax, Brent Pasley's subtle guitar and Mark Clare's well-phrased vocals.

'Judas', a highlight of their live set, is out on a Ripper single they share with the Screaming Meemees. We asked Mark and Brent (Sid to his friends) to pass judgement on their recording careers. Were they surprised to get the single out so fast?

"No," says Mark. "When we first agreed to do it, Bryan Staff said he could get it out fast. He thought late February. It came out early March."

Was Sid happy with the finished product?

"I was there producing with Bryan, but the sound in the studio seemed totally different to what you get when you play the record. The studio equipment is deceiving. It gives depth that you don't hear on a normal stereo. Next time we do something, the whole band will be there to listen and give their opinion. Bryan was happy, but nobody else really was. Next time, I think we'll have Steve Kennedy as engineer, because he did such a good job on the Meemees."

Mark agrees. "The sax wasn't as loud as we wanted and the vocals were too dominant. Mind you, at least when we play it live, it sounds a hell of a lot better. We originally went into the studio to re-do 'Five Miseries', but somehow we changed our minds."

'Five Miseries' is the song that Newmatics do on the Propeller compilation *Class Of 81*. "It was the first time any of us had been into a studio for more than just a look. We did four songs because the original intention was for a demo tape."

"We spent about five hours doing those songs," says Sid. "It was all in eight-track, whereas 'Judas' is in twenty-four. Despite that, 'Five Miseries' still sounds better to us. The problem seems to be that we didn't use Harlequin's facilities to their fullest. It took five and a half hours in the middle of the night to get it down. By early morning, we just wanted out of the place."

"Next time, though, things will be different. We are hoping to have guest artists on keyboards and brass. We have given tapes of 'Inquiry' to Don from the Blams and Jacqui from Youth For A Price, just to see what they come up with."

Newmatics have in the past been prolific song-writers, but lately things have slowed a little.

"We've got twenty-six original-songs," says Mark. "But we haven't written many for a while. Because we've been working full-time and gigging regularly, we haven't had much time to write. The only song we have added recently is Wilson Pickett's 'Land Of A Thousand Dances'."

Coming up soon is a six week tour which will see the Newmatics turning professional, a thought they don't entirely relish. After that, it's an EP and then back on tour again.

One thing's for certain. If you don't get to see Newmatics some time this year, it's going to be your fault.

Mark Phillips

FIRST SINGLE

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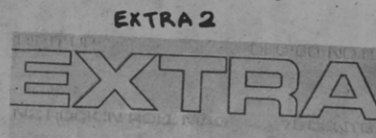
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