

Why Arthur? & other questions...



Tim Finn Interview

Tim Finn looks tired. Split Enz are only a week into their "Outback Tour" and the strain is showing. Ahead of them is about five months of tours — New Zealand, the United States, England, Europe, more U.S. and then Japan.

Only a week? A pretty hectic, even traumatic, week. The Enz began the tour in rural Victoria to critical acclaim ("a multi-talented super-group", said the Melbourne Herald). They then had to dash to Sydney for a day in a television studio for the national rock awards.

Enz were nominated in several categories, including best album cover for *True Colours*. Neil Finn won the Single of the Year award for 'I Got You'.

Neil also stunned the audience with a fairly realistic collapse as he ran on stage to collect his award. Suddenly he keeled over and just lay there for what seemed like ages. The MC, the normally chatter-happy Ian "Molly" Meldrum, seemed dumbfounded.

It was a rather grim portent of what occurred in Melbourne the next night when Neil came close to death. He plugged in his guitar for the second encore at the St Kilda Palais and received an electric shock. Twitching and shaking, he ran off stage. The concert came to an abrupt end. A naturopath massaged Neil and the next day he was resting.

Tim said Neil is still feeling "shattered". The non-stop work and then Neil's accident has taken a lot out of the band. The day before they cancelled all press interviews in order to rest. Today Tim is taking it on himself to squeeze in two days' worth of face-to-face discussion and phone interviews with reporters and disc jockeys in Brisbane, Launceston and who knows where.

After a few opening sallies about *Rip It Up* ("it's always looking for an attitude," he says) he settled down to talk about the Enz's new album. The record is called *Corroboree* in Australia, but for New Zealand and the rest of the world it's *Waiata*.

"*Corroboree* is just a word — like *Waiata* in New Zealand," Tim says. "There is a celebratory aspect to Split Enz because we have survived through thick and thin, and there is that ecstasy of a young band whenever we play together."

In a press release he expresses the idea this way: "When a band has got something special and a lot of belief and shares a certain joy in the music they're creating then in a sense each time they play it is like a corroboree."

"It is a feeling of ecstasy when it all works and jells. *Waiata* is a fitting title for us because we are celebrating having been together for a few years. It carries an ethnic, down-to-earth, basic feel, coupled with an edge of mystic, wondrous celebration."

The album contains five songs by Tim, four by Neil and two instrumentals by Eddie Rayner. "We like doing them," says Tim, "they're abstract."

To promote the record, they have gone into "outback" areas, country towns most Australian bands ignore.

"We have always made a point of going to the country areas. It stimulates people in those areas to get in and buy our album and it's good for us because we get a lot of input from the people."

The Enz are now a five-piece with the departure of drummer Malcolm Green. Percussionist-designer Noel Crombie is now in the drum chair.

I confess I can't offer much on Malcolm's decision to leave. Between interruptions for Tim to do another quick phone interview or two, discussion moved elsewhere. However, Noel as drummer has been well praised — in the press and by Tim.

"I feel drums are changing in rock," he says.

"Police and Talking Heads started messing with rhythms. I think that what is changing at the moment is rhythm. Malcolm was a very good rock drummer; Noel is a better swing drummer, he's more imaginative."

"The pay-off will be in a year from now. At the moment, he's fulfilling Malcolm's role, but every night he is getting looser."

The loss of Crombie the front man doesn't seem to be a loss at all.

"Now it's more of a band," says Tim. "People have said they don't miss Noel as front man, weirdo-on-the-left etc, and the stage line-up and look has changed so much, anyway. Ultimately, something is missing, but something has taken its place."

Once again, Noel's new costume designs have won praise, but Tim shies away from talk of "a look".

"Every time we go on the road we look different. It is just a series of changing images, not 'a look'. I don't think any other band has done this. The Beatles changed their appearance, but society was changing around them. We just change within our society."

"I like fancy dress, romanticism. I like the swashbuckling look that's back. Our ideas

sometimes accord with fashion and sometimes they don't. We don't plot about what will sell. Perhaps that's why it has taken us so long."

In Britain they got to number 10 with 'I Got You'. It also did well in Canada. In the United States, *True Colours* was in the Top 40 without a hit single "which is considered amazing". They are also making progress in Japan. In the U.S., especially on the West Coast and in the New York area, they have progressed from clubs to the 2000-3000 seater venues.

Clearly, Split Enz's time is heavily booked for months ahead, but there are already ideas for a new album. "*Corroboree* is almost a sister album to *True Colours*, a bigger, more sophisticated sister, but the next album will be quite different. Eddie is also doing his own album. It's two-thirds done and will be out later in the year."

"We want to do a film, but most rock films turn out so awful that it has left a bad taste. The film would have a plot and actors and we would be in it as part of the cast. We wouldn't be stars."

"It wouldn't be a grand concept, it would be a simple story told well, with great sounds. If we do a film there is a chance the album would contain songs that are in the film, but it wouldn't be the album of the film of the book of the ..."

"Australia is a good country to be in if you want to do films. Budgets are still in the two to three million dollar range, rather than twenty million."

(The day before Kirk Douglas flew into Melbourne to begin filming on *The Man from Snowy River*, a new Oz film starring the ubiquitous Jack Thompson. James Mason is in Sydney for another film.)

It has been a long road for Split Enz, but Tim says there was never a question of turning back. "Every time we played together we used to feel so good. We knew we had something."

"It's far better on this level (of success) than always trying. You get patronised too much when you are a cult band."

Tim sums up: "We all feel we have taken a step into the future by putting Noel on the drums."

"We are ahead of ourselves again."

Ken Williams

This is it! The 'Split Enz nearly all NZ *Rip It Up*'. Not quite what we planned, but the *Madness Supplement* in the middle is a lot of fun.

Split Enz continue to 'carry the flag' for the local music scene. They were out front in '76, they're still there. In the interim

years, bands and facilities have multiplied. There are now four 24-track studios and local singles and albums feature prominently on sales charts.

In fact the local 'scene' is a lot bigger than this mag can contain. To keep ahead, keep an eye on the local stuff in '81. MC

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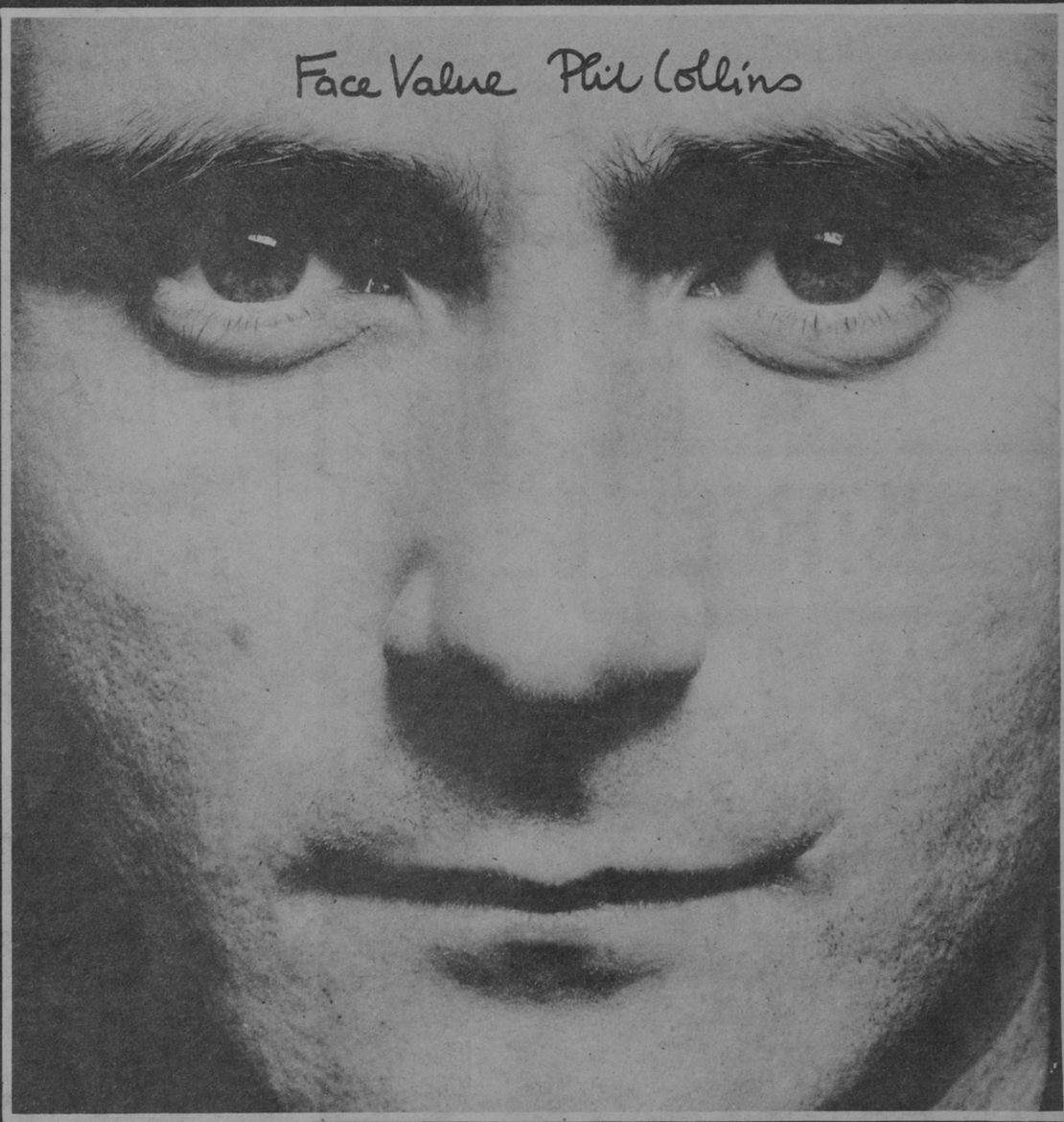
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Address



Phil Collins

Face Value Phil Collins



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