

Pop Mx in Oz



The Pop Mechanix are on the road opening for Split Enz on the *Outback Tour* of Australia. The Mechanix are playing pubs on their nights off, too — all to promote their CBS single 'Jumping Out A Window'. Here's ten days with the boys brought to you courtesy of Andrew Snoid.

March 15
Amidst much confusion we manage ourselves onto the aeroplane which gets us to Melbourne at 6 pm.

March 17
We embark on the Outback Tour 1981, and outback it is. Shepparton is the first gig — a town roughly the size of Hamilton. At approximately 8.10 Pop Mx clench teeth, bate breath and play. What a relief. Our first Oz gig and they like it. General consensus was that Paul Scott and I are both mental. Oh yeah, great.

March 18
Horsham. This place is truly outback(ward) — very tiny, very hot. Once again we go for the throat, a good gig. Water fight back at motel with Pops and Enz, great relief after the day's travel, with all of us together in a mini-cruiser. It's time to get to know your own band excessively well, and get to know someone else's for good measure.

March 19
Ballarat. After Horsham, Ballarat is like New York. Not far from Melbourne, wealthy and scenic. An excellent gig for us, and a great prep for Melbourne.

March 20
We headline at Macy's in Melbourne — first pub gig, and first gig in the city. Lots of media and industry people. Oh God, here goes ... got an encore, and all of us are rapt. Paul Mason discovers Astra Fighters.

March 21
Supporting Matt Finish, a Sydney band with a Top 10 album at the Jump Club. Huge crowd, good atmosphere — one of our best gigs so far.

March 22
Day off.

March 23
Melbourne Palais Theatre sold out. This is it. Amazing place on the waterfront in St Kilda. Truly excited about playing tonight, and the Enz are as nervous as the Pops for their debut city gig with the new lineup. Great reaction for the Pop Mx tonight. Bump into B. Stiggs, Melbourne

resident and Models' drummer. See Ian from the Swingers. Feels a bit more like home. Enz take the stage and knock them dead.

March 24
Geelong. Before we go on, *Class of 81* is playing through the PA; 'Let's Go To Australia ...' wonder what the Aussies think about that? Good gig but not as good as the Palais for us. Back to Melbourne straight after the show.

March 25
Interviews with Sydney papers, interview on 3XY in Melbourne, and press release day. *Hogan's Heroes* and *I Dream of Genie* both on TV — such a dilemma!

Andrew Snoid

Bones' Report

"Hi, this is Buster Stiggs, and I'm with the Swingers."

Well, that's how it used to be when the Swingers hit town. Buster handled the band's PR with a real flair. But now it's Bones Hillman on the other end of the line — from Melbourne.

"Why did we get rid of Buster? The same reasons as any band that has a line-up change really. We didn't think he was a strong enough drummer for the more progressive songs we were moving into. He didn't have the style, so we got Ian (Gilroy) and Buster joined the Models and everyone's happy. It's better now, our rhythm section is so much stronger."

Bones says he is really enjoying playing with the new drummer, and he's certainly playing with him a lot — the all-night recording session for the new single with David Tickle, which Bones had not long reeled out of for this phone interview, included 14 hours working on the bass drums alone.

"It was hard work, but it had to be done. There are no holes now."

The new single is to be a surprise. No, says the bassist, I can't even tell you the title.

The last one, it says here, went to number one in Australia faster than any single since 'Daddy Cool' and 'Eagle Rock' back in 1971. Were the band surprised 'Counting The Beat' did so well?

"We recorded it in August, so it had been sitting around for six months, during which time

we were telling ourselves 'yeah, it's a number one', but when it did get there we were flattered."

For my money, the re-done 'One Good Reason' on the flip was at least its equal. Was there any conflict for radio play?

"No, not really. The B side got played on a few FM stations though."

Producer Tickle is spending a couple of weeks with the band before they go into the Music Farm studios in mid-April for a month to do the album. The Swingers have always had plenty of songs to call on — what will actually make it onto the album?

"That's the hardest part at the moment coz there are so many songs. We're well ahead of ourselves in our music, we've just got to wait for everyone else to catch up. I think there will be two songs at the most which we were doing in New Zealand. 'Counting' will be on it, and the new single, too."

New Zealand bands heading across the Tasman usually experience varying success, possibly because they carry with them widely varying plans. Mi-Sex, after all, did it one way,



Judd, Hillman & Gilroy

Toy Love another. What was the Swingers' approach?

"We didn't have a plan as such. We knew it was going to be hard work. The first six months we were just managing to stay alive, making \$15 a week each. But we stuck it out."

After doing the album with Tickle (a producer Bones says "sparks something in the band that's magic") the Swingers will be doing a five-week national tour, and then it will be home in August for two weeks.

"Then we should be going to England — a couple of labels are already interested" he concludes, fingers audibly crossed.

The new single will be important for the band, the first album crucial. But at least the songs are there. Those who have followed the Swingers through the past two years will know they have already ditched songs ('The Sound Of Lovers', 'The Way That We Used To' etc) that most bands would be overjoyed to call on

for a debut album. Whatever, as winter descends, things could hardly be better.

(A footnote for rock historians: Phil Judd is currently bi-nomenclatural. You can call him Phil if you like, but you may also call him Bud, as many a Mushroom handout is wont to do at the moment. Bones, however, is sticking with 'Bones', and Ian with 'Ian'. We'll keep you posted.)

Roy Colbert



Hercopalypse Now

Out now is *The Wonder Book*, a four-track EP by the Hercopilots. At the time of recording, the band comprised Harry Ratbag (bass and vocals), Chris Williams (guitar and vocals) and Steve Wester (drums). Since then, Steve has developed ear and knee trouble, and has been replaced by Hugh Tercel.

What makes the Hercopilots different is their do-it-yourself attitude. Harry tried to explain.

"We really wanted to do the single but we couldn't be bothered trying to convince anyone else that we should. I did approach Simon Grigg about getting on *Class of 81*, but the others threatened to beat me up."

In some ways, the Pilots were lucky. There was no money from gigs, so all expenses were met from their own pockets. Chris is a printer, and he designed and laid out the cover. Harry's brother got the plate made, and Chris organised the printing.

Recording was done at Harlequin, and cost \$282. The first pressing was of 300 copies, for which a deposit of \$115 was paid, with the balance to follow. Already a second pressing of 200 is planned.

Hercopilots don't play much. Most of their gigs happen when they hire a generator and perform at various parks and squares around the city. Harry claims not to understand Joe Public.

"We played at XS, and half the crowd left, yet we've done the single and it has sold really well. I think recording is a better way of getting across to people."

At \$2.00, the single is selling at a loss. A costly miscalculation? The band aren't too worried about it.

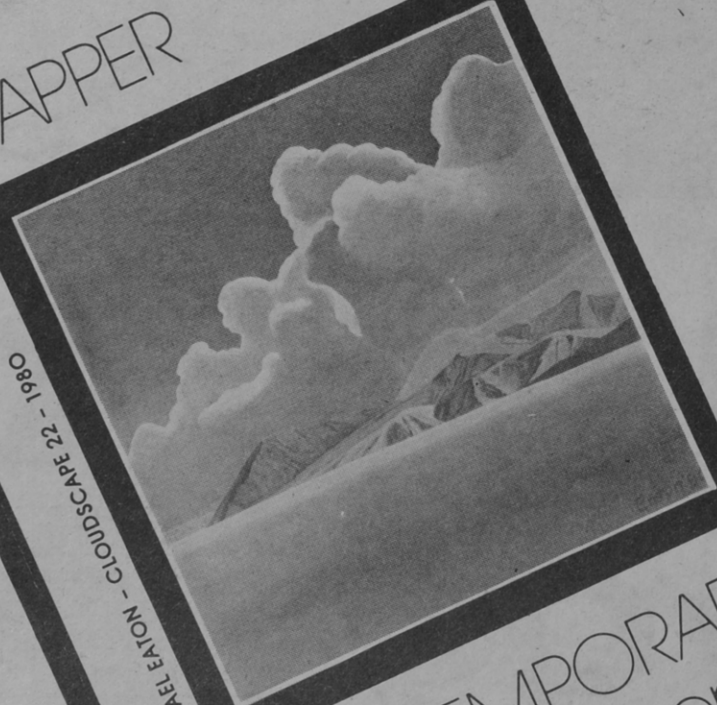
"We will definitely do it again. We want to do a three song single next. We hope to record it at the end of April and it will be called *Mission Two*."

For any aspiring young band hoping to follow the Pilots' example, Harry has two words of advice: "Start saving!"

Mark Phillips

CAPPER

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