

### Battle of the Bands Final Mainstreet, Sunday May 30

The culmination of six heats, the Battle of the Bands final was a great success, for the organisers at least. About seven hundred people crowded into a sweaty Mainstreet to witness twelve groups compete for the top prize of \$500 and six hours' recording at Harlequin Studios.

First up were Prime Movers. Unfortunately, I missed them. Four-piece Rem recording act, Arms For Children, are young, sharp and oozing with confidence. They ran through an all-original set that included their single to be, 'Danny Boy'. A band to watch. Next up were the Clean, from Dunedin. A three-piece line-up is a disadvantage on the large Mainstreet stage, but they handled it well. Their brand of Velvets-derived pop is invigorating and danceable, though the crowd just seemed confused.

The Androids are from Christchurch. Usually a six-piece, they were down to five, with one guitarist detained for drunken driving. Fast, heavy and loud, they had the crowd on their side. I was bored to tears. The Skinny Brothers have a female keyboardist and dabble in the New York sound. Lack of presentation and non-descript songs are their biggest handicaps. Regulators were the second three-piece of the night. They work hard at giving value for money, but lack strong material.

Seventh band on were the Famous Five, down to four because of their sax player's departure. Leaping about with amazing agility, their vocalist won the crowd over immediately. Her strong Pauline Murray-styled vocals helped make it a very positive debut. Smirks have a guitarist with flared jeans and a moustache, and a vocalist who seems to have been to too many Sheerlux gigs. Forget them.

The Instigators, a five-piece



AFC, Mainstreet

with wailing sax and keyboards packed the dance floor. They have a ska band look and sound, uptempo rhythms but unimpressive songs. They were followed by Corners. They combine a taste for the Gang of Four with sax and flute. If they drop the flute and tighten up their songs a bit, they could have something.

Second-to-last, at 1.00 am, were the Shakin' Jimmys. No pretensions, just good fun rock and roll. Old covers, including a dynamite version of Cliff's 'Move It', had the pissed crowd louting at full pace. Last spot of the evening went to Youth For A Price. Quirky and highly original, they went down like a sinking ship. Oh, the joys of trying something new.

So, what of the judges? Instigators were first, Corners second and third place was shared between the Skinny Brothers and the Famous Five. Mark Phillips

**Billy Joel**  
Logan Campbell Centre,  
May 23rd

Joel's popularity is certainly wide-ranging; he drew the most mixed-age audience I've ever seen at a rock concert. Nor was he about to disappoint them. Everything about this show was so professional (and yes, for music like Joel's it does matter). With excellent lighting, crystal clear sound — the Logan Campbell needs the seats in downstairs for good acoustics — and a performance that ran nigh on two hours, no one except the Sunday press was griping about the ticket prices.

Obviously enough, Joel drew nearly all his material from the last three albums. And though he chose an equal number of tracks from each, the performance times were weighted towards *The Stranger* and then *52nd Street*. A tacit acknowledgement of relative quality perhaps?

Many wearisomely familiar numbers came as a refreshing surprise. Songs I'd turn off the radio became enjoyable through powerhouse performances. The band was, yes, thoroughly professional. Stirring work by Richie Cannatta on various reeds and keyboards often made it sound bigger than just a five-piece. For me, Cannatta occasionally stole the show. If, live, Joel is only a feisty bantamweight, he's got at least one henchman who's a true heavy.

To be sure there were the irritating moments: The obligatory, heavy-handed, stomp-along finale for one. And while Billy being 'big on audience participation' is all to the good, dated jokes about punk rockers are rather a yawn. The audience loved them though.

Nonetheless, if rock has become yet another form of family entertainment, I'd much rather it were with shows as good as Joel's than the nauseous hybrids of such as Streisand or Diamond. Peter Thomson

**The Volkswagens, 25 Cents, The Pin Group**  
Gladstone, May 13.

Three local bands provided the most aesthetically successful, early week residency yet at the Gladstone. While points of comparison between the bands exist, their range of styles reflected almost everything in the last twenty years of beat music.

Most challenging and cerebral of the three were the Pin Group, the most recent and most sophisticated expression of Roy Montgomery's capricious vision. A guitar band, yet

possessing Christchurch's most intriguing rhythm section (Buck Stapleton, and Ross Humphries), the Pin Group presented six brand new excerpts from the oracles of personal despair balanced by Jim Reeves' 'He'll Have to Go' and the Red Crayola's 'Hurricane Fighter Plane' all rendered in voices like the knell of doom.

Sandwiched between the austerity of the Pin Group and the hedonism of the Volkswagens were the erratic but invigorating 25 Cents. Too frequently, they assume the dimensions and texture of a female Androids. Thus, while their performances are often illuminating, especially in 'Psycho', 'The Witch' and Pere Ubu's 'Non-Alignment Pact', their choice of material often betrays them into predictability ('What Goes On') or stridency ('Beautiful Pictures'). There is no excuse for their version of 'Another Girl, Another Planet'. All in all, drummer/vocalist Mary Heney deserves better.

By contrast, Jon Segovia is only now beginning to get what he has deserved all along. He's leading a fine and memorable band, and he's top of the bill at the Gladstone. Best of all, he's recruited Liz Wylie to share the responsibilities of lead vocalist. The bracket is now divided into half a dozen songs sung by Segovia, and an equal number by the inimitable Ms. Wylie. This woman is the ghost of all four Shangri-Las and when she and Segovia croon 'Baby, I Love You' critical faculties disintegrate. Naturally, Blitz and Norman excelled.

If nothing else, these three bands proved that you don't have to be a technocrat or play new-age heavy metal to succeed in Christchurch. Indeed, they displayed the brand of inventiveness that has always thrived, albeit fitfully, in these climes. Desmond Brice

**Jane's Farewell Party**  
Uni Terrace Dining Room  
Dunedin, May 18

This was a farewell for Jane Dodd (bassist for the Chills) and also for the Clean, off to Auckland at dawn the next morning in a white van with Martin of the Chills.

The Verlaines play first. The songs, from singer-guitarist Graham Downes, outstrip the performers at this stage, but they are good songs, chances being taken, tempos flirted with dangerously. Someone in the band is clearly pushing for a return to the electric Dylan of 1966, but other areas are being explored also, many of them a long way from the electric Dylan of 1966.

The Chills next — excellent. Martin Phillips is writing some of the finest rock songs to come out of this town since December 1977, one, 'Rolling Moon', deserving to be vinylised immediately. 'Sixteen Heart Throbs', 'Silhouette', 'Drift', 'Juicy Creaming Soda' are as good. The band have developed into a really effective little unit, imminent disintegration notwithstanding. The Velvet and the Enemy seem the propelling spectres, the future anyone's guess. Let's hope those songs are not lost.

Sneaky Feelings — A bad night for them. The set ends prematurely in disarray with the second guitarist fleeing the stage. The band were promising when they first surfaced,

but they are still only that, even though to their credit they've replaced most of the 60s' covers with originals. Their music is rollicking and Mersey-ish with guitarist Matthew Bannister quite vital — things work best when he is infrequently supported by singer David Pine on rhythm guitar. No peaks apparent on the writing front yet, but the spirit is there.

The Clean closes the evening with a long set which, warts and all, delights an audience who have clearly come primarily to see them. Some sandpapering has still to be done vocally, but the superior songs — 'Hold On To The Rail', 'Oddity', 'Getting Older', 'Thumbs Off', 'Tally Ho', 'Success Story' — are coming all the time. And David Kilgour is a guitarist you can stay interested in all night.

As at May 1981, the potential was undoubtedly there for the younger bands for a 'Dunedin 81' album of rare quality. No matter that some of the many good young bands are splintering even as these words are typed, or that the required performance might never be extracted once the tape machines start to run. Line the best of the above up alongside Bored Games' 'Bridesmaid', 'Joe 90', 'Sactab Overdose' and 'Happy Endings' and you'd be left with a compiler's nightmare as to what to omit. Roy Colbert

**Mi-Sex**  
Mad Ranks, The Visitors  
Mainstreet, May 12.

Opening band, the Visitors, didn't come on till after nine. A few got up to jive while the rest tried to attract the attention of passing waitresses. The Visitors play high-speed, 'modern' powerpop which flows in one ear and out the other, leaving little impression in between. They sound like a dozen other bands, but you can work off those excess kilos quite happily to them.

Switch gear, gossip-gossip, drink-drink, note-note. Mad Ranks take the stage. Shades of XTC, Flowers, Numan, even Mi-Sex. Warwick Keay and Tim Powles can't quite leave Flight X7 behind. Again I search in vain for something original to hold the attention. No luck. Copybook music that follows trends instead of trying to set some of its own.

Mind you, the same charge has been laid against Mi-Sex often enough. They stand or fall on the strength of their individual songs, and few could deny their ability to write a hookline.

They wasted no time, opening with 'Ghosts', vigorous and confident. If you've been to a Mi-Sex concert or two, you know what to expect. The stage act has changed little over the years. It's about time Gilpin found something to do apart from strangling guitars. They had just about the biggest PA I've ever seen at Mainstreet, which made the sound a wee bit overwhelming. The bass and drums made the diaphragm flutter, and a continuing feedback problem was excruciating.

So again, we look to the songs, especially the new ones. The cosmic nightmares of the first two albums seem to have been ditched for good. Straight love songs are in order, and Mi-Sex have quite a reasonable crop of them.

The new single, 'Falling In

And Out', has far more impact on stage, but there are better songs on display tonight. Stanton takes the lead on 'Shanghai', a meaty, mid-tempo number that displays a quite satisfactory voice. Gilpin is playing it much straighter now, less histrionics and more emotion. A definite improvement. 'Tears In Her Wine', 'She Could Have Been Mine' and 'Talking To Myself' are all indicative of the new approach: more melody, less thrash. All were well received, even though it was the old favourites which got the big cheers.

Mi-Sex are moving ahead, maturing rather than mellowing. The new album will prove whether they can sustain their initial impact. Duncan Campbell

## OFF THE RECORD

Since we realise that most of you don't ready anything other than *Rip It Up*, this month we've arranged a quick flip through a few other Auckland magazines to show you what you're missing out on.

Top of the stack is the slick new *Auckland Metro*. It describes itself as 'New Zealand's First City Magazine', and who are we to argue? It's aimed at the lower end of the snob market, with features on such worthwhile subjects as 'Inside Government House: At Home With The Beatties In Auckland' and 'Where The Top People Live'. What with a story on the making of *Top Half*, and a gush over Herald journalist Susan Maxwell, the exercise shapes up as a Herne Bay *Woman's Weekly*. I imagine the genuine quality stuff — Geoff Chapple's China piece, for example, will pretty quickly disappear — and I wouldn't be too sure that the whole enterprise won't be down the tube pretty soon after.

Going straight for the throat of the local product, *City Girl*, is NZ edition of Australian office-girl mag *Sheila*. This one has a better idea of its place, sticking close to a tried format of clothes, overdressed Sydney-siders and sleazy, sexist boudoir advice. Apart from a laughable dining out 'feature', the most recognisable local colour is given by a rather creepy story on the four men *Sheila* thought you girls found most fascinating — Bryan Staff, Colin Hogg, Kevin Black and Fred Botica — let's just leave it at that. It also shows a typical inability to distinguish stories from advertising: are the dining out and shop features ads or articles? It's hard to guess the likely lifespan of *NZ Sheila*, it really depends on how many of you really want to read some Australian's idea of what makes a 'Red Hot Lover'.

Finally in this month's random selection comes something from the other end of the market entirely — the possibly defunct *Empty Heads*, 'Auckland's Only Real Fanzine'. This is genuine trash sixteen pages which contain more enthusiasm and information than both the other two publications. I haven't seen one around for months, so perhaps the publishers lost their enthusiasm, or started a band instead. If you're still out there, take this as an order for the next issue, huh? Francis Stark



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