

The news conference is scattered. Jim Barnes is talking, drummer Steve Prestwich makes a fast exit when he hears where he is supposed to be after breakfast. Bassist Phil Small's location is unknown. Ian Moss surveys Auckland from the window. Walker's anticipating what might happen in the US apart from fame and fortune.

"We are definitely dealing with a record company that doesn't quite know what the hell it's signed, and that doesn't have any great urge to find out. Hopefully, when they hear us live, individuals will become fanatical, and we'll start making some headway."

The tour's also a testing ground. As far as Australia is concerned, Chisel may have hit the top, but Walker says the way in which the band goes down in the States will show if the music's genuine, from the gut, and in line with its origins.

"It would be nice to sell records, because you can make millions of bucks there, but if we go in and play to a cross-section audience, and they get off on it, I wouldn't care if we don't sell five records. It's an indication of all the music that myself, and some of the other guys have listened to since we were kids, that we've been able to pull it off, perform it, and that we haven't missed the point."

Walker's not concerned about the Australian lyrics being irrelevant to US people.

"Because the music is American-influenced they'll never figure out exactly what the songs are about, or even care. And I don't really care about it either. Lyrically, we're not trying to present an Australian identity, and we're not trying to avoid becoming an American band, but we do tend to write about what directly affects us. That'll always be Australia, and Australian events, or else the focus will be on this part of the world. There's a lot of things important to people living in South East Asia, that Americans don't know about, but it's still what we'll write about."

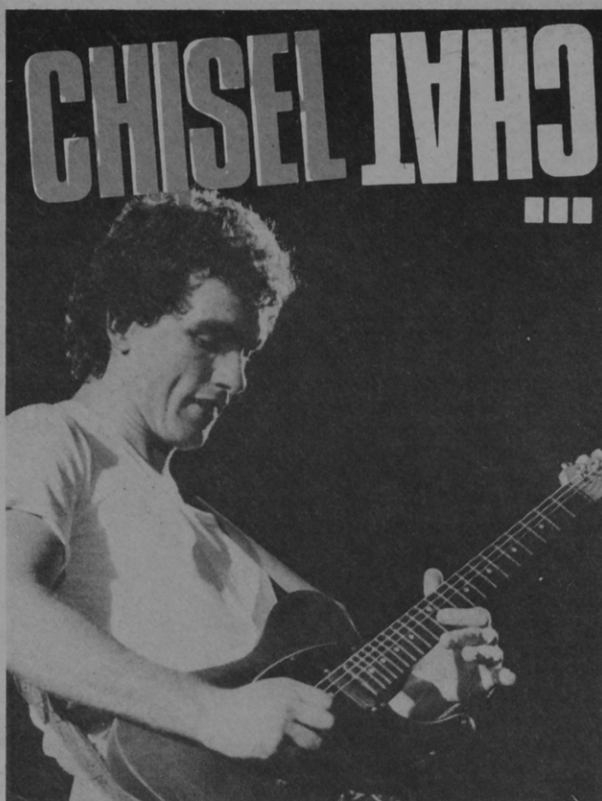
So the music is the prime communicator, not lyrics?

"Probably. On the other hand, it has been shown as possible for bands to go into America from other areas of the world, and keep their lyric content pretty ethnic, like English bands, Caribbean bands, Bob Marley. He never sang about jet planes going into LA and stuff, he sang about problems in Kingston. If the Americans become interested, it can lead them to find out about a part of the world which they're not generally involved with."

They'll concentrate on *East* material for the US, but Walker says if the band is in need of a change after "playing *East* to death" since Christmas 1979, they'll use newer songs. Songwriting within the band is gradually evening out. For the first two albums Walker carried most of the credits, but now each member has his own.

"It's the best thing that ever happened. I'm all for it. It means we're more of a band. With the first two albums, the guys just dropped into the studio like session musicians. There was no commitment, but having their own songs they're a whole lot more involved. *East* was the album where that happened, and the one where we sound like what we are."

During the tour, Walker will be trying to squeeze in negotiations for the soundtrack distribution of the film *Freedom*, made by the *Breaker Morant* team.



It's about an unemployed 22 year old who takes to stealing cars. Walker has written the score. It sounds nothing like Chisel, but has a "Cold Chisel flavour."

"In doing it, I deliberately steered clear of writing as I normally do for Cold Chisel, because I didn't want to rob any material which we could use in the future. This is the first outside project I dived into and got paid properly for, so it was a big break from years of musical involvement with the band."

The story of the Star Hotel GS, is in Ian Moss' words, a first in Australian history. The hotel was home for a weird mixture of Newcastle unemployed: surfies, camps and bikies. They all congregated at the Star. It was their turf, and it had a huge reputation for raging.

In a classic case of the fat cat versus the powerless underdog, Tooths brewery decided they couldn't afford alterations which would mean the local council extending the hotel's licence, so the Star was to be demolished for a carpark.

One September night in 1979, several thousand arrived for the farewell. The police moved in after closing time to try and kick everyone out. They met with some resistance. Two police cars were overturned and set on fire, 51 people were arrested.

Chisel has immortalised the story in song. Don Walker claims they took advantage of the incident by doing so, but the fact remains it's a powerful number — something of an

anthem which even Hamilton people know about.

At Maceys, Hamiltonians large and small, young and old, are seated cross-legged on the floor of what could have been a church hall at one time, or workers' canteen. They are slowly raised to their feet by the Visitors, who produce a set where the songs run into one another, and the vocalist moves like a Barbie doll.

However, people are jumping at the end, and at around 11 Cold Chisel hit the stage. Jim Barnes swaggers on with his customary combat boots, headband, on which the lettering is meant to read "fight for freedom", and a massive bottle of vodka. He launches into 'Conversations' — loudly.

Maceys took 850 that night, and they're all totally absorbed, hanging from the rafters, shaking fists and smiling. The pace is fast. 'Four Walls' is kept to a minimum, a new song is thrown in, followed by a frenetic 'Risin' Sun'.

Ian Moss takes vocals on Phil Small's number 'My Baby'. Phil Small sucks on a cigarette.

The lighting is selective, and effective. White spots hit Barnes, highlight Moss and his excellent guitar, and draw Don Walker from the back, where he's buried behind gear.

'Cheap Wine' obviously touches a few hearts, only to be followed by what could have been a disaster. It's 'Star Hotel', and Jim Barnes' mike cuts out, at the very crucial moment. He tries it again, smiles, and shrugs apologetically at the crowd. Steve Prestwich's forehead is screwed up in pain.

Amazingly, Hamilton carries on singing, and the line "spent last night under custody" is clearly audible. Walker takes the keyboard down, and slowly builds up and up, and the mike is back on.

The evening ends with two encores and a special song for heavy metal fans. Barnes capped it with wild antics on the amps through 'Wild Thing', and then mixed sociably with an ecstatic audience.

Maceys lights up, and it's all over.

The day before Walker had talked about the band's position, and the position of rock and roll. It is not as simple as going as far as a band can go.

"I don't see it on normal limits of what a rock and roll band can do. I think bands should go beyond being just entertainment, you know, big stadiums, clubs full of kids. Rock and roll should be as much of a force in society as that guy is." He points to Hiwi Tauroa on the *Herald's* front page. "The best rock and roll always has been."

"At the moment, rock and roll around the world is sad because it's all cream puff entertainment. People have forgotten just how forceful rock and roll can be, and it's slipped back to being like popular music was in 1960, when it was past the Elvis stage, and had degenerated into Pat Boone pap."

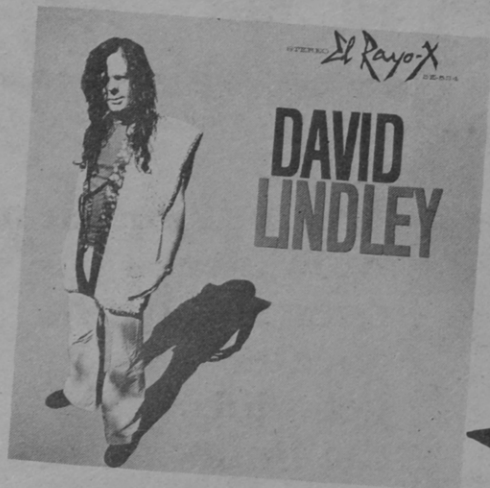
"Even English music movements have degenerated into fashion, and in the States it's Lover Boy, and Reo Speedwagon — mass consumer pap which has no affect on people's lives."

"We're more than that in Australia, I wouldn't be pretentious enough to say we are a political force, but I think it's gone further than just being entertainment."

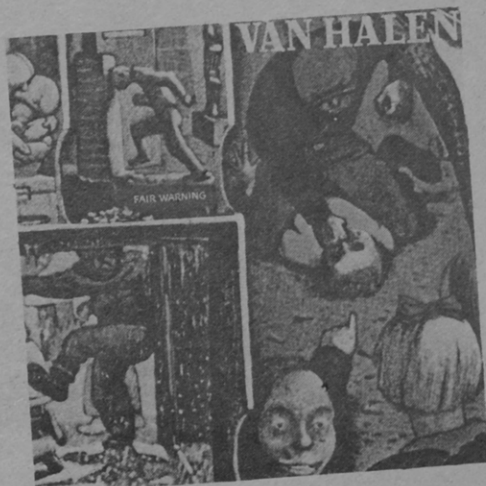
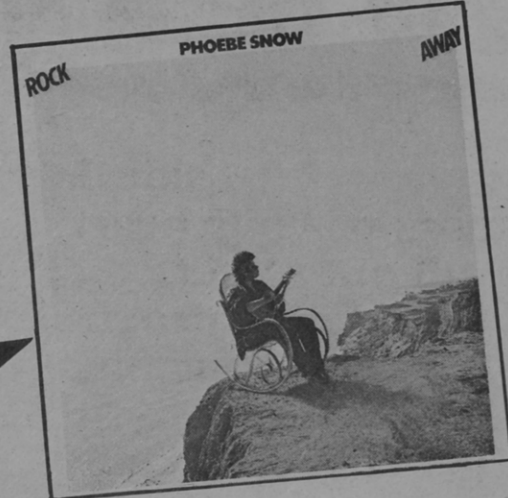
A perfect understatement.

AnnLouise Martin

EL RAYO-X DAVID LINDLEY



ROCK AWAY PHOEBE SNOW



VAN HALEN FAIR WARNING



GEORGE HARRISON SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND



Give the gift of music.
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