



Newmatics blending the clashes

When the Newmatics formed over a year ago, there were just four young mods, a couple of Vespas and an old house in Nikau St. For a more authentic ska feel, saxophonist Simon Clark was added, then came the departure of drummer Dick Reed and the introduction of new skin man, Ben Staples.

These days, there are six Newmatics, two successful tours, a double single and Nikau St is now firewood. Have the band achieved as much as they hoped to?

"We have in the sense that we have branched out and got across to a lot more people," says Syd.

"It has been gratifying touring the country twice," adds

Mark, "but we certainly haven't achieved as much as we would have liked to."

If you like to reach as many people as possible, why play only selected gigs?

"We like holidays," quips Syd.

Mark is a little more serious. "Jeff has been at ATI, and that has been limiting — especially on the 'roadshow' when he was only with the band for certain gigs. But that is coming to an end, so things will change. In a sense, we have played as much as we have wanted to. Things will obviously have to be stepped up a bit, especially from the financial angle. For a start, we are a couple of grand in debt for the EP.

Jeff sees the band as still being amateurs.

"Although we have supposedly turned professional, we try not to treat it as a job."

The band's most recent acquisition is tenor sax player Kelly Rogers. Mark explains why the band wanted a sixth Newmatic.

"We added Kelly because we wanted to get a brass section happening properly. It was probably born out of a change in attitude. We started as mods, then got into ska, then reggae. The whole thing continually changes. We like feeling our way.

"The brass was just another change of direction. We all decided that we particularly liked the brass sound, and wanted more of it."

"It all comes down to new ideas," says Syd. "We worked on the theory that six heads are better than five."

Does being a large band make things a strain financially?

"We haven't been paying ourselves very much," says Mark. "Adding one more member doesn't make much difference. None of us rely on the band for bread and butter. I think that if you are going to enhance your sound, you are going to benefit in the long run anyway."

Syd agrees. "We could probably draw wages if we were working six nights a week, but we don't want that. Obviously, it is healthier financially than it was six months ago. Basically, it is just cigarette money."

Did you enjoy the tour with the Meemees and the Blams?

Every one agrees, "Yes!"

Mark elaborates. "We would definitely like to do a roadshow again. I think it's an excellent idea for several bands to get together. Not only does it cut costs, but it means you get across to people you wouldn't normally reach. It was good to play to people who were there for the Blams or the Meemees.

"I hate the attitude of going it alone, thinking you are too good to need help from other people. A classic example of helping each other was the Blams stepping in to do a gig at Mainstreet when my voice went and we couldn't play. We'd have been in the shit if they hadn't done that."

Out now is *Broadcast O.R.* It is the Newmatics' third vinyl venture and the first to give them satisfaction.

"It's great to get out something that we are happy with," says Syd.

Included on the EP is 'Riot Squad'. Does Mark see the song as a political statement?

"It is more of a personal statement. We were playing XS last December when the place was suddenly full of task force boys beating people's heads in with no apparent motive. We found out that someone threw a bottle at some Ds. The inspector in charge said it was a matter of 'retaliation'. I have never seen police acting like that. It was like a glimpse into the future."

Simon adds, "They had those long riot batons that they used for the tour. I think it was probably the first time they used them."

What about the inside of the sleeve?

"That picture came from the *Star*," says Mark. "It was on the front page — new recruits on New Year's Eve. That photo says it all, out for a good time, batons in hand, and a smile on their faces."

How do they think their music has changed?

"We have attained much more of a natural tightness," says Syd. "We all have different influences. It's a case of blending our clashes."

Mark sees things continually changing. "We are trying to get into music that has more feeling, something more than a cold, hard riff. I think the brass probably adds to the soul feel."

Ben wakes up. "It's also probably got to do with the fact we have been listening to Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett — things we hadn't really taken the time to listen to."

What of future recording plans?

"An album," is the unanimous decision.

"We would like to do some dub," says Syd. "Perhaps with

'Five Miseries'."

Simon concludes, "What we would like to do is record here and take the tapes overseas to remix them. There may be someone here with the ability to reach the sound we want, but we don't know who they are, and they probably don't know who we are."

Mark Phillips



Blind Date have been going since February of this year, and have already established themselves as a very hot live act, combining their dynamic three-piece sound with a fine feeling for melody and a firm commitment that music is there to be enjoyed. They comprise former Street Talkers Mike Caen (25 years old, eight of them as a professional muso) and Andy MacDonald (26 and a good seven years of playing under his belt), and Lyn Buchanan (just 20, and already one of the hottest live drummers you'll see around).

After Street Talk called it a day, towards the end of last year, Mike spent a good three months mooching around, deciding what to do next. He takes up the story.

"The splitting of Street Talk was a very natural thing. Our music was taking very different forms, as everyone who saw us live realised. It came at a good time for everybody, because I was glad of the opportunity to do my own stuff."

"Songwriting for me is the best part of the whole thing. It's the most private, creative part."

During those three months, Mike wrote about a dozen new songs, which form the basis of Blind Date's current live set. It also includes four or five numbers from the Street Talk days.

"We've actually had a lull since the band started, with the pressure of promotion and keeping things going generally. I've only just started writing again. Once we've got a few more down, we'll be able to drop those old Street Talk songs, or just keep them as an encore."

Working as a three-piece has its limitations, but as the Jam point out, they're only there if you acknowledge them. Mike certainly doesn't feel restricted.

"We try to keep a smoothness running through. We're more interested in the continuity of beat, which people find easy to dance to. Personally, listening to the radio, I find that's a characteristic of all overseas music."

Getting that solid rhythmic 'bottom' to the sound is the hardest thing to achieve, Mike points to that incredible drum beat on the Pretenders' 'Message Of Love' as an example. Blind Date's debut single, 'Don't Let It Get To You/Apache', worked well, but there have been problems recording the follow-up. The band has been working with Paul Crowther, but isn't satisfied with the two tracks so far recorded. They'll probably end up as B-sides.

"That first single got us a lot of airplay, but not a lot of sales. It's done what we expected it to do."

Having decided that they've got better songs to record, Blind Date will be returning to the studio shortly to have another go. Having convinced Aucklanders, they're now off around the country to persuade others. It's a period of education for Mike as well.

"The thing that is a struggle for me personally is changing roles in the band. I'm not a frontman, as a frontman is supposed to be, and I sometimes have trouble coming to terms with that. But otherwise, it's been pretty straightforward." Duncan Campbell



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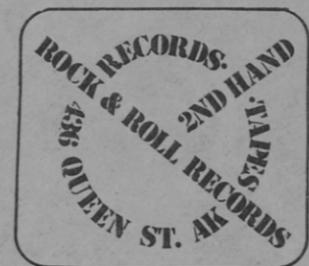


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