

## BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

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## sit-ups, sly . . .



You may wonder why it took Ian Dury and the Blockheads so long to pay penance in the colonies. They were going to do it two years ago, but it was put off - "due to a mass collapse of me," says 39-year-old Mr Dury. "We did 74 concerts in a row, and it just about killed me, and I don't string myself out, or do drugs, I just got absolutely knackered. What I do now is I

counteract it with lots of exercise."

"It's of paramount importance, because it's what you call manic, or obsessive energy that you expend on stage. It's not physical like sit-ups. You build up a lot of nervous energy and unless you expend it, it kind of stacks up against you, and after 70 gigs I was crazy. Tension or pressure, whatever you want to call it, it builds up while you're gigging, and just doesn't dissipate."

The Australasian foray is the first tour for the year.

"We've been doing like a gig every two weeks at pop festivals and stuff round Europe, and taking it a bit easier. We were on the road almost continuously for three years, and that was a hell of a long run, a lot of work, and you know, we ain't young sprats. Norman Watt-Roy's the youngest at 28."

The Blockheads are busy in-between times. Drummer Charley Charles is recording at the moment, saxophonist Davey Payne's just made an album in New York and Wilko makes albums. Ian has been working with writing partner Chas Jankel on Chas' new album.

Chas also worked with Dury on *Lord Upminster*, recorded at the Compass Point Studios, Nassau in the Bahamas.

"First day me and Chas rolled up there, Steve Stanley (the young sprat who engineered and mixed the album) went "hello white boy, you play the guitar?" and Chas went "oh fuck me, what next," until they saw him playing, and then all these heavy dudes were like coming up to him, which I knew would happen because he's a good guitar player, young Chas."

Did Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar have much influence on *Lord Upminster*?

"Yeah! But ... they've been playing reggae now for 15 years, and the first thing Sly asked me

was did I want a reggae album, and I said no, I want dance music. He almost breathed a sigh of relief. What they've been doing with Grace Jones isn't reggae, it's funk."

"Really I worked with them guys because their rhythms are so excellent. They know more about rhythm than most people, therefore I can learn a lot."

What's next? A live Dury and the Blockheads' recording may appear someday but Dury is in no hurry. They have between 15 and 20 concerts on tape. Mickey Gallagher's been through it all, organizing the best takes.

"We've got another two days of listening to do. Mickey's already done five. And we're going to record again when we get back to Blighty, we'll record a gig, and we've got a live album. We could probably make it a quadruple."

With *Lord Upminster* Dury moved to Polydor, leaving the Stiff label.

"The independents have almost changed places with the majors. The majors all want to

be like the independents, and the independents all want to be like the majors.

"I've got a completely open deal with Polydor, I can do what I want, anytime I like, they can't control nothing, not a scrap, and if they could I wouldn't have signed with them. And they offered me suitable remuneration for my services, which was part of it."

Did you feel limited being labelled as a Stiff act?

"I didn't feel categorized at first, but afterwards I felt Stiff was all strictly lightweight, humorous, middle-of-the-road crap. I didn't like being in a bag with them all, with the exception of Madness - Polydor have the Who, the Jam, Killing Joke, lots of good English bands."

How much say did you have in *Jukebox Dury*, Stiff's "greatest Dury's" compilation album?

"I discussed it, I wanted it to be different, but having left Stiff, I had no more legal control. I've now changed that clause in my new contract."

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