



These days the regular gig goers who keep the local music scene alive seem to stay away from Sweetwaters in droves. Once it seemed to be the annual general meeting of the NZ music scene. These days it falls somewhere between Australian Promotion Week and the Great NZ Stag Party.

The Australian takeover at Sweetwaters 1982 is just part of a broader assault by Australian bands on the NZ market. The evidence of their effectiveness was seen at Sweetwaters where a large proportion of the audience seemed to be there for the Australian bands who in turn made the most of the opportunity and won a lot of support.

It's hard to avoid directly comparing the performances of the local and Australian bands. The Australians come out of it looking better in many but by no means all respects. All the Australian bands really performed full-on, in a way that no resident Kiwi act really matched. Secondly, they were more in control of the technology, with crews, who made sure the sound and lighting systems were used to best advantage and that any snags were quickly sorted out.

On the other hand in terms of material and substance they seemed at times to have succeeded only in making silk purses out of sow's ears. Much of the material performed so impressively was stunningly ordinary, and on occasions glaringly derivative. In at least a couple of instances the entire act of performance seemed motivated by nothing more than crude male narcissism.

NZ bands have gotten too head-up-the-bum about credibility and artiness, and unless they recapture the art of showmanship they will have their home market stolen from under their noses. What once was seen as a NZ music market is now more obviously merely a component in a larger Australasian market and the competition is that much fiercer.

As usual the worst features of the Festival were off-stage. The general squalor of tent-town life has to be accepted, although with the Festival on a permanent site, things may gradually improve. What probably won't improve is the behaviour of a large slice of the punters. It would be nice to have a Festival without drunks pissing and throwing-up randomly into the crowd, where women were not molested constantly by inebriated slobes and where you didn't have to roster guard duty over your belongings.

Don MacKay

Sorry, Ghetto, but while you were on stage I was struggling to drive a camper van against the flow of traffic, to try and escape the parking area where men in white coats erroneously sent me. Someone told me you were good, so I'll take them at their word.

Taste Of Bounty have evolved from their slightly cosmic state of 12 months ago, to a fusion of rhythm and blues with a touch of Latin soul. Warm weather music, something this festival needed more of.

Something the Sunnyboys needed was a tune to hang one's hat on. Their heavy 60s-influenced pop, leaning a little towards the Zombies, sounded all the same and too familiar. It may have been a great decade but all this looking back is not a healthy attitude.

INXS suffer too from influences which only make their music anonymous. There are dozens of Roxy/Bowie clone sounds around, and I can't get excited about any of them.

More summer sounds from Herbs, who improve with each viewing, albeit slowly. They get a little tighter and gain a little more drive, and they seem to have a couple of reasonable new songs. I can take or leave their politics (and anyone else's, for that matter), but their South Pacific reggae is culturally vital. They even managed to get away

with adding some horns, giving themselves an extra dimension.

Festival audiences love their metal, and there was no doubting the top dogs on Friday. The Angels riffed loud and well, working solidly within their limits, pleasing the punters by being utterly predictable. You don't get many surprises at festivals, and the Angels gave everyone what they expected. Can't ask much more than that.

Bed, bed, bed.
Duncan Campbell

The headbanging Angels had overrun their time, it was past midnight, the Newmatics were tired, and it showed. Syd's guitar was inaudible for the first 10 minutes. But the songs from their EP coaxed the punters into dancing. On first hearing, the new single, 'Square One', sounds like a winner. A wild, funky piece, well thought out and well executed.

Danse Macabre handled cries of 'play something ragey' well. The sheer tightness of their sound secured a good response from at least the front section of the audience. The EP tracks were obvious highlights, as was a new song featuring Nigel on 12-string electric guitar. The evening finished abruptly when the stage crew prevented 'Between The Lines' being performed, as it was already 2 am.

Mark Phillips

SATURDAY

Freudian Slips opened on Saturday. Being an all-girl feminist band sounds like a problem. It is. Hecklers with their hands in their pockets gave them a hard time, but they gave it back. It all got very heated, and the Slips' music suffered. They have several promising reggae-based originals, but their version of 'Then He Kissed Me', lyrically altered to 'Then He Hit Me', was the worst thing heard in the whole four days. Forget the politics, get on with your sport.

Clive Wilson was backed by a strong band that included some ex-Furys. It was rock and roll, punchy, straight-forward festival fare. Their major drawback was Clive trying to be Joe Cocker.

Legs For Fish? Their sole qualification for playing the main stage must have been knowing the right people.

Mark Phillips

The Valentinos sounded better from the river, down among the mudflats. Their gloomy, two-note songs seemed so out of place in brilliant sunshine. They're fine enough to jump around to in a pub, but outdoors they only made me feel hotter and stickier than I already was.

Spaces injected more personality into the proceedings, in the form of singer Warren Hyde, a little Scotsman who demands

attention.

What he needs is more songs that can take advantage of his voice and antics. He's at his best with 'Disadvantage', which is Spaces' most untypical song.

Blind Date were happy, extroverted and tuneful. Very orthodox, but pleasant. Braving the heat and dust out front was becoming a chore, and still nothing really on stage to take the mind off it.

Duncan Campbell

Feed the face, recharge the brain, and into the dust bowl for a little pop music. In the last year, Screaming Meemees have shot to national fame. For once they didn't mess up a major gig. Peter has become a red-hot bassist, injecting balls into songs that were lacking six months ago. 'See Me Go' had the crowd singing.

Back from Australia, minus Andrew Snoid, Pop Mechanix were the band everyone wanted to see. They didn't disappoint. Both Paul Scott and Chris Moore looked spot-on, and the band, worked like their life depended on it. A few of the old favourites were absent, but several new pieces made worthwhile replacements.

Mark Phillips

Penknife Glides finally made it worth being there. My, but they were good. Their sound has

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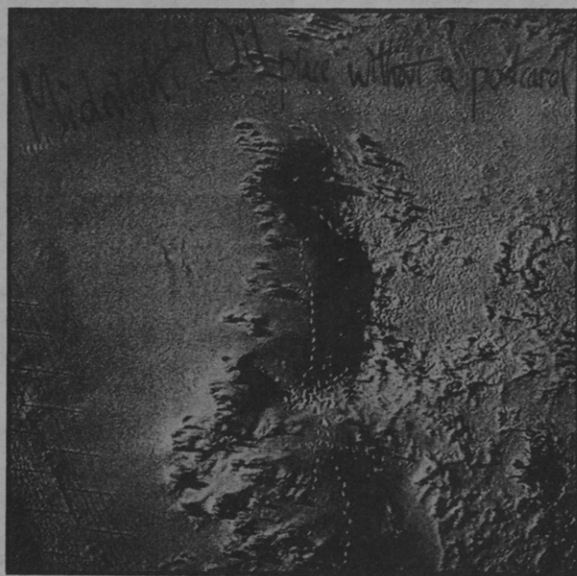
Jim Barnes, Cold Chisel



Mentals' Martin Plaza and Greedy Smith.

Midnight Oil.

their latest album
"place without a postcard"



they blew
me away
at Sweetwaters

