

# D.D. SMASH



D.D. Smash: Lisle Kinney, Revox, Dave Dobbyn, Peter Rooda.

This story should be entitled 'The Art of Bagpipes and Marinated Fish'. Dave Dobbyn and I have spent several hours discussing these and diverse other topics of interest. It is getting late, and I am feeling just a teeny bit pissed.

Dave Dobbyn is about 24 years old. He is of Irish Catholic stock, a true son of Auckland, sings and writes songs in a very certain way, has got himself a very tasty rock 'n' roll band, and is a very easy chap to like.

Dave Dobbyn has ended up the most commercially successful ex-Dude, as many people expected he would. It's hard to ignore a voice with that much soul, and can anyone doubt the songs he's written?

The breakup of Th' Dudes the year before last surprised everybody. They were considered the brightest hope, after all, and everything seemed to be working in their favour. Dobbyn paints a different picture.

"I wasn't confident at all, really, with what we had. We were so poppy, and even pappy, in some ways. We were barely a rock 'n' roll band, but in the last six months on the road, we turned into that, because we'd got a taste of the lifestyle and came to terms with it.

"We lost out because we didn't know where our limits lay. I mean, three of us had been together since we were at school, and the five of us got sick of each other. We were constantly touring, and we were wrapped up contractually here. Even though we went to Australia and did a three-month abortive tour with that terrible English band, the Members, the only thing that got us through that was the novelty of the thing.

"We effectively split up straight after that, because we knew there was nothing we could do apart from sit and wait till the contract expired. If Ian and I had been given the freedom we wanted in the studio, and we'd had our shit together, we could

have come out with two more albums.

"Th' Dudes, as far as I'm concerned, were just a stepping stone. I hardly ever think about them now, because I'm doing other things. We were together four years, and the changes that happened in that time were quite incredible, especially touring the country and all of a sudden being these ridiculous, faggot pop stars. It just got to be too much after a while."

But one thing Dobbyn is proud of is the way Th' Dudes helped pub rock come of age in this country. They built stages, brought in light shows, made the show an event in itself, rather than just a noise in the background to drink to. The provinces, especially, have benefitted.

"That was quite a buzz, going to those places and making something happen. People really appreciated the fact that a rock 'n' roll band took their time out to make something good.

"Things have changed now, bands have their own identities, and there isn't silly, hyped-up rivalry that there was a few years ago."

Another pioneer in the field was Th' Dudes' manager, Charley Gray. Dobbyn can't praise him enough.

"Nobody else was prepared to stick their neck out quite as much as Charley was. I think he should go down in history as one of the prime movers as far as New Zealand rock and roll is concerned."

Dobbyn's partnership with Ian Morris is a long-standing one, sharing songwriting credits for Th' Dudes, and now working on D.D. Smash's debut LP. Morris has special ability as an arranger, complementing Dobbyn's ear for melody.

Dobbyn gets a little bitter when he starts talking of the business attitudes in this country. He says Th' Dudes spent most of their own money promoting their debut album, for lack of support from their record company.

"I still think New Zealand is the most fartarse country to get anything happening as far as business or marketing is concerned. To get people co-operating with what you're trying to do, like your distributors, or whatever, is very difficult. They're not going to put themselves out on a limb, and neither are a lot of independents that have sparked up in the last couple of years.

"It's a waste of time signing up with any of the multinational companies. The New Zealand branch may sign you, but then they take your product to their Australian branch and it's not interested. So you're fucked.

"Bands have to know about those things, regardless of what they've got, how good they are musically, they've got to know about the business, or otherwise they're wasting their time."

After Th' Dudes split, Dobbyn took his time. He was determined to be his own boss, and wanted to play with more mature musicians.

"I spent about three months just writing songs, staring at the television, walking around, getting away from the schizophrenic lifestyle, and then I got a phone call from Sharon O'Neill, saying she wanted me to play the guitar. I couldn't believe it, I woke up the next day thinking it was a dream. I thought that's gotta be good, because I knew she was doing the Boz Scaggs tour in Australia, and I thought at least I'd get discipline as a musician. I mean, I'll never be a good guitar player, because I'm too interested in other things to concentrate on it."

The tour of duty with Sharon was a 'knockout', first in this country, then in Australia, supporting Scaggs, playing the major venues. It was a lesson in professionalism for Dobbyn, who'd been recording solo at Stebbings, but didn't feel ready at that time to commit himself to a deal of any sort.

Dobbyn spent about six months from December 1980, after finishing the O'Neill tour, in a pad on the waterfront, writing songs, recording and doing the odd commercial. Most of the songs in D.D. Smash's current repertoire stem from that period.

After that, it was either sell his estate (his guitar and amp) and head for Australia, or else form a band here. The former idea didn't appeal, because there was nothing definite going.

"I ran into Rooda and Revox while they were still playing in Lip Service, and I knew their days were numbered because they were incredibly in debt, and they were getting bored with what they were doing. They both said yes, and I was blown out, so then we only had to find a bass player.

"I ran into Lisle up at the Rumba Bar. I thought he was dead or overseas, or something. He said he was just turning into an alcoholic, playing in a nightclub out at Papakura. So we rescued him, spent about a week and a half rehearsing, then played our first gigs.

"It took me a while to come to terms with standing in the middle of the stage, singing and playing guitar, with people looking my way. I wasn't confident of the songs or the performance. I never am, which I think is a good thing in some ways. I never know how the performance was. I can feel the audience, I can feel the buzz off the other guys in the band, but I never know how well I've done, until I've come off stage, then people reassure me that everything was OK.

"I'm never confident of that, and if I keep like that, I can



## "TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT..."