

# Quarter Flash

America's Top New Band for '82



P.S. If you've got Pat Benetar's 'Precious Time' or Fleetwood Mac's 'Rumours' get hold of a copy of 'Quarter Flash'. You won't be disappointed!



## MENTALS: Greedy spills the beans...



Mental As Anything look very tired. Who wouldn't, after a week of provincial gigs, travelling by road inbetween? Pubs n' Unis was the order of this tour; a lot of fun, good response wherever they went, but very little time to relax.

Greedy Smith manages a smile, but he's obviously exhausted and not about to start playing up his image just for the media. He scoffs at our referring to him as rock's Norman Gunston, in our review of the Sweetwaters performance. Just kidding, Greedy. Honest.

Mental As Anything are an oasis in an Australian desert of heavy metal. Sly, slick and witty music, firmly rooted in rockabilly, country and western, and mid-60s pop. *Cats And Dogs* is generally acknowledged as the Mentals' most accomplished album, where their diverse ideas came together consistently.

"I think it's our first proper album. With the first one, we didn't know what we wanted or what we should sound like, and the second one just got away from us altogether."

"When we originally started recording, we'd only been playing in pubs and at parties. We'd had one residency for about a week, and then these guys wanted to start a record company (Regular), and they liked us, so they thought that if they put out an EP with us, it would be a good way to get started."

"This time, we put our foot down with the record company, and said we wanted more time. Like, with *Expresso Bongo*, we'd only learned the songs the week before we recorded them, and then we put them down in seven days."

"With *Cats And Dogs*, we were able to put the tracks down, then leave them and think about them for a while. A lot of the material had already been played live as well, which helped. And I think the change of producer was a good thing. We wanted a bigger sound."

Greedy agrees that the band has few 'modern' influences. They got together, the way so many bands have, at art school. In this case, the National Art School in Sydney.

"You don't do anything at art school. Well, you didn't in those days. It's a bit more like a uni-

versity now. We just went to parties and went to the pub, and all the work you had to do in a week could be done in about an hour and a half."

"The other guys had already got together, and I just came along and played a bit of harmonica, and insidiously got myself in that way. I'd played in a couple of bands before, just harmonica and singing, with Keith Welsh (now Icehouse), who I went to school with."

"When I joined this bunch, Martin persuaded me to get an organ, so we went and bought this nice wedding reception organ from Noel Carter's Dance Band. I haven't really learned anything since I bought it, so I've just adapted my style to make it as easy to play as possible."

Greedy does a nice version of Booker T's 'Time Is Tight', which he says is very easy to play. He's currently practising 'Green Onions'. Can't wait to hear what he does with that.

After their round of parties, the Mentals got their first residency, at the Unicorn Hotel in Paddington, just up the road from the art school. This was back in 1977, when the only other pub competition was from Radio Birdman, as punk was just starting to take hold in Sydney.

"People thought we were punk, because of our name. We'd do a few country and western songs in the first set, and all the new would-be punks would leave the room, then come back when we did the 60s covers and our own stuff. It was really funny."

Mental As Anything are still shopping for an international deal for *Cats And Dogs*. *Get Wet* was released by Virgin in Britain, where they got some quite favourable press.

Greedy is cynical about the British press, feeling that they crucify anything that's well supported by a record company, yet stick up for the supposed underdogs, who are simply suffering from lack of promotion.

Greedy is looking forward to performing further afield, testing new audiences, once things are sorted out. Does he feel the Mentals have reached a peak in Australia?

"We've been doing pretty well. We're not on the Cold Chisel level, but we do OK, we're quite happy. We sell heaps and heaps of singles at home, but the albums don't do so well — perhaps we lack the mystique to be an album band."

Joe Camilleri of Jo Jo Zep was quoted as saying he'd earned enough from *Screaming Targets* to buy a second-hand Monaro. I ask Greedy what he thinks is the ultimate Australian car.

"Oh, the Hemi Pacer is pretty good."

Shocking pink? (See 'Room In Third').

"Oh yeah, it's good for visibility. It's a safety sort of a vehicle, really, especially in the overcast weather."

Do you own one?

"No. I don't drive."

The Mentals do actually have some artistic skill, despite Greedy's comment about art school. They paint and sketch while on the road, and they've just held an exhibition of their work at a Sydney art gallery. All the paintings were for sale ("You've got to make a buck somehow").

What offers for Greedy Smith's impressions of golfers, Peter O'Doherty's motel rooms, or Wayne DeLisle's portrait of the Mentals' manager?

Duncan Campbell

## neighbours

APRIL  
8 COROMANDEL  
9 COLVILLE  
10 WAIHI BEACH  
MAY 21, 22 GLUEPOT  
JUNE NORTH ISLAND TOUR  
AUGUST SOUTH ISLAND TOUR  
Bookings: Rick Bryant,  
Box 47-135, Auckland



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APRIL 29, 30 & MAY 1, 2  
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