

SIMPLE MINDS' FROM PAGE 22

"There's a certain type of atmosphere. Our music can be used for different purposes — for listening to or travelling to. 'This Earth That You Walk Upon', 'Seeing Out the Angels' and two songs on the new album, 'Someone Somewhere in Summertime' and 'The Big Sleep' — when I play them I do literally feel like breaking into tears. Jim and I have known each other a long time and he says certain things that evoke certain feelings and when they're combined with the melodic content then that really wrenches my heart. That's what Simple Minds' music means to me.

"I'll give you an example. We played a festival in Belgium earlier this year and we came on and it was pouring but we plugged in and started playing 'Someone Somewhere in Summertime' with no thoughts of being electrocuted. And I kept thinking of the lyric 'walking in the soft rain', it was the first time the line really grabbed me and I just experienced a shiver up my spine and I was reduced to tears. The feeling in the band was almost psychic."

j k e r m r

Kerr the catalyst. A man with little musical ability according to Burchill but full of ideas and imagination.

What sort of education did you have Jim?

"I stayed at school until I was 16. Charles and I used to stay off school and go to the library to get the books we wanted instead of William Golding, which is fair enough, but we wanted more abstract stuff like Cocteau. I'm not into that now, I'm more into movies and magazines."

What sort?

"De Niro and Nicholson. People like that have much more of an influence on me now than music. I get the same warm feeling from brilliant films as I do from brilliant music. I think it's all connected."

So what about the audience and concert tonight, everything seemed to go according to expectations, the audience were receptive and right behind the band?

"Yeah, chalk and cheese, we actually felt we were on a stage and so we felt we could project. I think on the first night we felt subconsciously that no one was seeing us apart from the first two rows and maybe that shadowed our performance."

Another live occasion, this time last year when a friend of mine saw Simple Minds in the Hammersmith Odeon and a certain Jim Kerr fell off the stage. What happened?

"Just drugs. I never do anything in halves and for months on end I'm the straightest man in the world and then I just blow out. I don't want to glorify the effects of it but the way the light hit the mike-stand it was just like a shining ball and I was drawn towards it and I just walked by it and before I knew it I was off the fuckin' stage. I felt so stupid. Since then I've been pretty straight."

I heard that Martin Fry of ABC tried to lecture you on drugs?

"Yeah, we were doing *Top of the Pops*, our first appearance and we were staying at the same hotel and he came down for breakfast and he says to me 'you look terrible, what have you been taking?' And I said speed and stuff and I hadn't been to bed in two days. And he said, 'you're getting too involved in rock'n'roll things, look at us we like to go home at the weekends to our parents'. And I said you don't have to tell me that Martin, it's written all over your face that you like to be with your



Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill

Photo by Kerry Brown



D A N C E
M A C A B R E

The forthcoming album from Danse Macabre is rather appropriately titled *Last Request*. It marks the termination of a band that has hovered near the top rung of the New Zealand rock ladder.

According to lead guitarist Wes Prince, *Last Request* is a statement of what the band achieved. He believes it is a truer representation than their first recording effort, the EP *Between The Lines*. It's guitar orientated with the vocals further back.

The outstanding track is an instrumental, 'Web', already on video for *Radio With Pictures* and the obvious choice for a single if there is to be one. On *Last Request*, the band has achieved a more complex yet spontaneous sound, probably due to the fact that much of it came together in the studio.

"Most of the songs were basically worked out when we went in but there was a lot of improvisation," says Wes. "It was a matter of putting the best things down on top of the framework."

Good as it may be, the band's decision in early September to go their separate ways has left the record company in the unenviable position of trying to sell the album without the help of live performances to promote it.

Lead singer Nigel Russell maintains, a trifle optimistically perhaps, that this shouldn't present a major problem.

"People buy records by overseas bands without having the chance to see them," he says. "They buy them for the music alone — I don't see why it shouldn't work that way in New Zealand."

All four members say they are pleased with *Last Request* and consider it the band's best work to date. So why the split?

According to Wes, the band had achieved as much as it could with the old format.

"We were all becoming frustrated and a fresh start was definitely in order."

He, drummer Roddy Carlson and bass guitarist Ralph Crump are still working together but are aiming for a completely new sound.

"We want to do something totally original," says Wes. "We're going to move away from the guitars and get down to basics with the emphasis on drums."

Meanwhile, Nigel, who is 'tired of guitars' is poised to lead New Zealand's first true synthesiser band. He's fairly tight-lipped about the format but hints that there will be three or four keyboards augmented by percussion.

When one considers the virtually opposite directions the band members are now heading in, it seems little short of a miracle that they managed to stay together as long as they did.

"We were trying to cover too many bases," says Wes. "We were heading towards our own style but couldn't get the guitar and synthesiser to work together as well as we would have liked."

While they baulk at the suggestion of serious conflicts, it seems differing interests caused more than a few problems. It was clearly frustrating for Wes, Ralph and Roddy who were instigating the music to have Nigel in the lime-light.

Spotlighted up front, Nigel appeared to many audiences as the mainstay of the band yet he wrote virtually none of the material.

"We never wanted a frontman," says Roddy. "We wanted to be four musicians playing as individuals on an equal basis."

Nor did they want to cultivate a definite image but with Nigel and his synthesiser centre stage it was unavoidable. And it was his moody vocals that led to the tiresome comparisons with Joy Division.

"People have to have their reference points," says Wes. "They can't accept the fact that a New Zealand group can come up with something new. As it happens, 'Conditioner' was written well before we heard anything by Joy Division apart from 'Transmission'."

Also uninvited was the link-up with new romanticism which resulted from the band playing at the Ballroom Blitz at Mainstreet earlier this year, a gig they would prefer to forget.

"We should never have done it," says Wes. "We weren't into that scene."

He, Roddy and Ralph are now striving for a sound that can't be compared to anything anyone else is doing — "however hard that may be."

They are still in the market for a vocalist but would rather not actually go out and look for someone.

"It would be nice if someone approached us," says Roddy. "Someone who heard us play and felt they had something to offer."

They are in no hurry to start playing live and when they do will keep it low-key. Nigel plans to get his venture underway in a quiet way too.

Nationwide tours are definitely not on the agenda. The band is still paying the bills from their last major stint on the road.

Danse Macabre never went professional because it was simply not practical.

"Most bands that consider themselves professional are on the dole anyway," says Ralph.

All four say the local scene is pretty dead at the moment but predict great things for 1983.

"It's probably an incubation period right now," says Nigel. "Lots of bands have been practicing for months but won't start playing 'til next year."

As far as recording goes, they see the strength of the industry in the independents.

"As long as they keep going things can only improve," says Nigel. "The major companies are still not receptive to local music — they prefer to play safe."

"They come out of the woodwork when a major overseas band is in town and they've all got their complementary tickets but how often do you see their representatives at a local gig?"

Hitting the big time is no longer of prime importance anyway. According to Wes, the greatest enjoyment comes from struggling to make it.

"Once you get there, the challenge has gone. I'm looking forward to having that challenge again."

Madeleine Sheehan

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