

If the name Carol Pope doesn't mean much to you now, it will before long. Her band, Rough Trade, already has a string of music awards and two platinum albums to its credit in its native Canada and is set for a breakthrough in this part of the world. A single, 'All Touch', has already been a sizeable hit in Australia.

The nucleus of Rough Trade is Carol and guitarist Kevan Staples, who between them write all the material. They formed the band in 1974 and achieved national notoriety with a musical they wrote and performed in 1978, entitled *Restless Underwear*. Star of the show was the enormous transvestite known as Devine and the whole show had a decidedly sexual overtone.

In fact, sex does play a major part in the Rough Trade sound, which Carol Pope cheerfully admits. Her voice is earthy and vibrant, the closest comparison being Grace Jones and her song lyrics are ... interesting.

Rough Trade's second LP, *For Those Who Think Young*, will be released here in the near future through WEA and Carol Pope

passed through Auckland recently on one of those exhausting meet-the-media jaunts. As she struggled to fight off the jet lag, we discussed the state of Canadian music. I asked her whether it was still being overshadowed by the USA.

"Not any more because there are more MOR rock bands that are really doing well in the States, like Loverboy, Rush, April Wine and Chilliwack.

"There's a good club scene in Canada, but the record companies normally won't sign anything that's different, because they're just branch offices of the American companies. But records are very cheap to make and distribute and there is a radio station which will play new things.

"We haven't had to compromise to succeed at home, which is why the Americans haven't picked us up. But we've signed with Boardwalk (Joan Jett's label), so we'll see what happens."

Rough Trade got its start playing bars in the sleazy part of Toronto, gaining a reputation for rather over-the-top stage acts with satirical-sexual overtones. Carol prefers audiences that are a bit



Carol Pope, Rough Trade

juiced up and able to move around ("I find them more responsive").

Carol has no qualms singing about sex. I ask her which is the more dangerous subject: sex or politics.

"Neither. I think religion is more dangerous than politics. When I'm performing on-stage, I do it with a sense of humour. I'm self-mocking as a performer. If people are offended, that's their problem.

"When we performed in Europe recently, people ignored the sexual aspect. All they asked me about was politics. It's only in America that people are really hung up

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'Arry chats to JOHN COOPER CLARKE

It's after midnight and I'm biting my nails till there's nothing left at all. Ed sez interview at 12.30. So after half a dozen Steinies it's time to pick up the phone and speak to the Thin White Fluke.

Ullo, is John Cooper Clarke there please?

"Yes, this is he."

Late as usual. On the other blower, were you. So 'ow did it all begin. Did what begin, I ask myself. We start with a three-second delay. Was it the so-called punk explosion?

"Yeah, that was a big break for me. I was working in nightclubs, a totally different environment from the punk scene."

Aha, another early starter. But people didn't grasp it — as they usually don't.

"I was a bit before me time, really."

Maybe three months. Things used to be pretty impromptu in the earlier days — no formal commitments, just wherever one happened to be at a certain time. A lot of gaps were filled by Cooper Clarke at gigs while bands were changing over. Nowadays it has changed.

"I get booked beforehand now, things 'ave changed, been dragged upmarket. It's not as spontaneous as it used to be, but that's to be expected, really. That was a good way of getting initial attention."

So what's 'e been up to lately?

"There 'asn't been a lot of work in England lately. It kind of eases off between the months of July and October. It's all because the students go 'ome for summer. That kind of affects gigs an 'ell of a lot in England. But I've been working in Europe a lot. I've just finished a short tour of 'olland, that was really good. I don't know what they get out of it, given the language barrier, but they seem to enjoy it all the same. I've been around Scandinavia, Italy, New York, Toronto. They all went really well also."

No mention of Downunder. "Well, I believe a lot of shows in Australia are sold out already."

Pity we can't offer the same, but that's the promoter's problem. So what about backing — maybe some music per'aps?

"Possibly tapes, but definitely not a band. I never tour with a band. Per'aps some of the new stuff I might do with tapes — some of the stuff from *Zip Style Method*. Most of it will be just raw poetry, you know — plenty of roughage."

This poses another problem — radio airplay. We don't 'ear much down 'ere, so what's it like over there?

"I 'ave a problem over 'ere with airplay meself. Only me clean stuff ever gets on air and there aren't that many without at least one swear word in them."

What about the music press then?

"Well, between the three main ones: *The Face*, *NME* and *Sounds*, they are probably pretty accurate about what is happening, but as you say, you're three months behind. I mean, do you know John Lennon is dead?"

Yeah, that was in June, wasn't it? So which form of media is most vital to the modern poet, such as yourself?

"TV. I definitely want to work in TV. I do much more work in TV than I do in radio. They're much more liberal than the radio stations, the TV companies."

What about the Poetry Olympics.

"It was the first time I met a lot of European Poetry Establishment — people like R. D. Laing, the famous psychotherapist."

What about Attila the Stockbroker.

"Yeah, there's 'im and Seething Wells and Little Brother — seems there's quite a few people at it now."

And Linton Kwesi Johnson.

"Yeah, I did an hour with him about six months ago, which went really well. There was two different styles of delivery — while I was fast and furious, 'e was slow and intense, but the two styles complimented each other very nicely. It was very successful. We kind of mutually admire each other and I'm sure I'll work with 'im again."

And New Order — they seem to be very quiet about the tour.

"Well, I better keep my trap shut as well. I've worked with them before, when they were Joy Division."

Yes, old Manchester townfolk never die, they just come down 'ere. 'Ave things changed much since then?

"Yeah, the music's changed quite a bit."

But nothing said about the feeling. So what about Manchester — a very industrious city?

"I'm living in Chelsea now and I 'aven't been back for a few months. There's about three times as many unemployed and about three times as many bands since I was last back there. People seem to 'ave a lot more time on their 'ands. Entertainment and the breweries flourish in times such as these."

So is one looking forward to coming to these parts.

"Yeah, it will be a break from the English winter."

You've got the sunglasses, but 'ave you packed your shorts?

"Nah, I look a cunt in shorts."

Will we be 'earing any new poetry, written especially for down 'ere?

"Nah, but I'll probably have a bit of new stuff written by the time I reach there, yeah."

I think once you've seen the Queen St nightlife, the Zephyr boys, you'll probably have a whole new record's worth to go 'ome with.

"Zephyr Boys?"

Arry

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