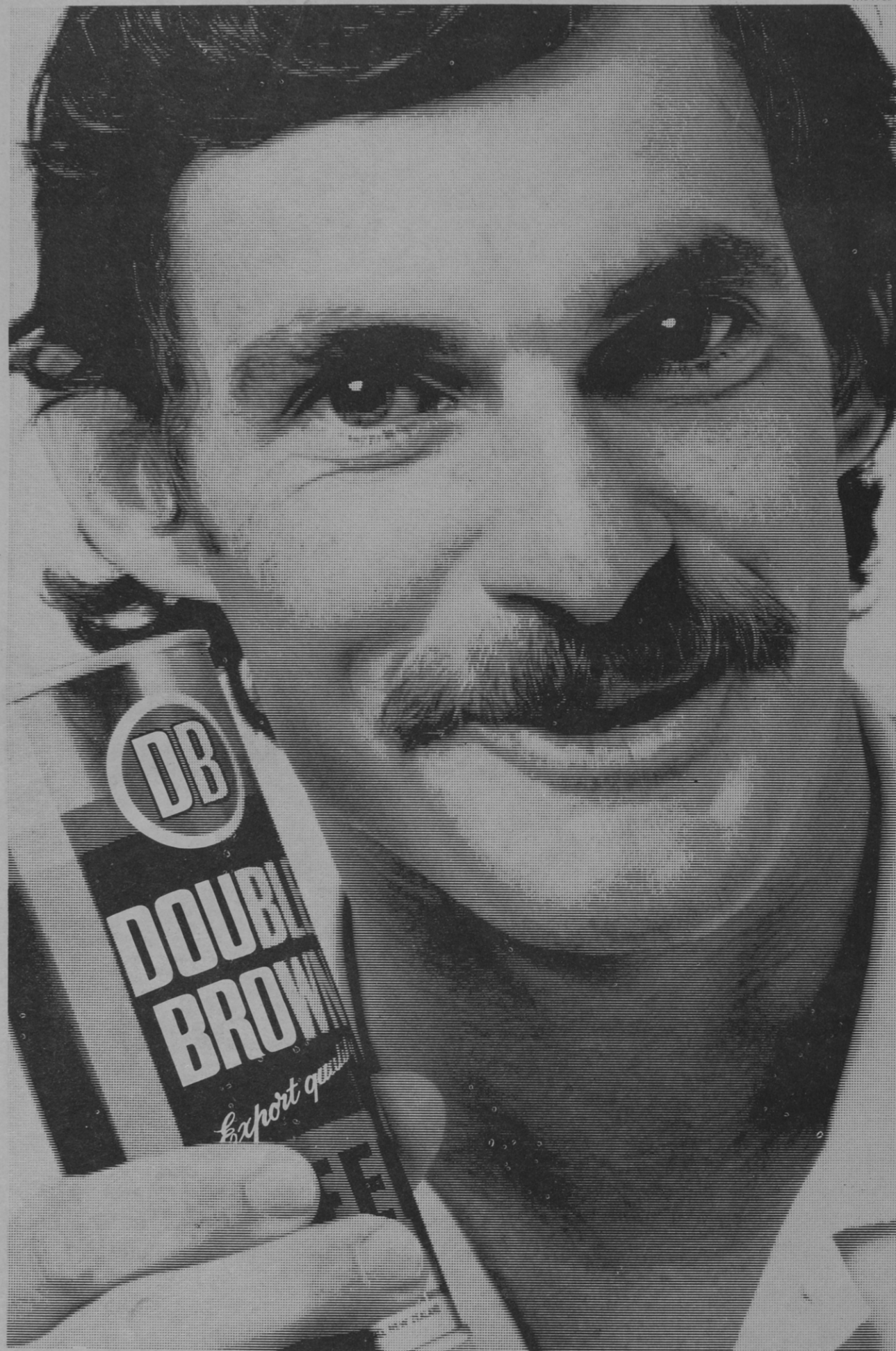


DOUBLE BROWN BECAUSE... "It hits the spot"



The ever-active Joe Camilleri is on the move again. Right now he is touring Australia to promote his new album, *Cha* (Mushroom). The record marks the big step forward for Jo Jo Zep. The connection with the Falcons has been severed. And from the ashes of that frequently wonderful R&B band rises Jo Jo Zep renewed, with one of the best albums for this year.

After a two-year recording hiatus, Joe Camilleri has taken three other musicians, a drum computer and a female singer into a studio and in 20 days come up with an extraordinary album. *Taxi Mary* is a hit, though not a blockbuster yet. On Australian TV's *Countdown* pop show, *Taxi Mary* seemed to be a pleasant novelty. On the album, with the benefit of improved stereo sound, it's a killer. Because *Cha* is such an album of rhythms it benefits hugely from reasonably decent sound.

The studio rush had to do with the availability of producer and keyboards player Peter Solley. Although Camilleri acknowledges a love-hate relationship with Solley, he admits it brings out the best in both.

"It's like a marriage on the rocks," says Joe. "But no one can get the sounds from my ideas that he does. That's why I pleaded to have him."

Solley, who had already done *Screaming Targets* and *Hats Off* for Joe, was tied up in the States. With only three weeks to spend on the album, they opted for the only available studio, one unfamiliar to both.

Camilleri had come up with the ideas while experimenting with different rhythms in his home studio.

"I think after a while you just become aware that you can't stay in the same kind of area," Joe says.

"People are moving faster now. They want to hear different sounds. There's a definite move away from the guitar syndrome. Things like percussion are much more common."

Certainly, *Cha* is a percussion album. If anything dominates, it is the Linn drum computer. That seems an extraordinary choice for a man who worships Otis Redding.

"I looked at Peter in amazement when he suggested it," Joe says. "I

have always had this thing of having a soul feel. But he was right. The Linn drum has a very real sound. You can change or update it, it's got the percussion and because I was into Latin beats it was perfect. We got all the feels we wanted without wasting the time and sounding cold."

Joe cut his crew. Only one guitarist was needed. Long-time Falcon Jeff Bustin is the only guitarist who plays throughout. Solley is on keyboards, Simon Gyllies is on bass and occasional vocals are taken by Jane Clifton.

Clifton has been a cast member of the long-running Australian television jail soapie, *Prisoner*. Her role as a tough, wise-cracking prostitute would never suggest the incredible singing voice. On *Taxi Mary* she punctuates, on the uptempo *You're Gonna Get It, Boy* she is more than a match for Joe. A great pairing.

Joe persuaded Clifton into his 11-piece road band with the promise that she would get to see Australia. That sort of band costs. Joe is aware of the cost, but is determined to make the vision a reality.

"So what if I have to work behind a bar for six months?" he says. "At least I've got this out of my system. I don't think I've changed. It's more of a progression. I've always been into all kinds of music, so I don't think *Cha* is a radical change. We thought we might as well just go for it. We were cut throat with ideas if they didn't shape up and we worked incredibly long days."

At this stage Joe was struck down with glandular fever and the recording became a test of stamina and faith. "I couldn't afford to rest properly because I had to spend a lot of time in the studio," Joe says. "If I started to feel dizzy or weak I had to go home and lie down."

Joe still gets tired because of the residual effects of the fever. But the success of *Cha*, artistically and, one hopes, financially, should be the tonic to put him right for Christmas.

"With *Cha* I haven't had to compromise anything," Joe stresses. "My ideas finally had the chance to really come out."

Play the chilling reworking of Dionne Warwick's *Walk On By* for proof.

Ken Williams

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