

Life in the Garden



pressed flowers & new roses

BALLON D'ESSAI
Mark Rastrick vocals
Lyndon Fraser guitar
Stephen McIntyre bass/guitar
Mathew Campbell bass/guitar
Scott Wilkinson drums

The message is that the former *enfants terribles* of Christchurch music have grown up. Formed in February 1981 when at secondary school the band are moving away from origins that owed a little to Public Image. Fraser and Campbell are new additions.

A four song EP appeared last May and a new EP will appear shortly, accompanied perhaps by a comic to match. MH

CHANCE
John Markie vocals/guitars
Desmond Brice bass
Jeffrey Carey drums

The Chance are a good argument for the theory that Christchurch has a mixed pool of musicians entering in and out of seemingly endless permutations. Members have previously been in Vacuum, War Poets, Hey Clint, Hard Sums and the Volkswagens.

With the Chance comes an insistence on some form of permanence and a dedication to pop and tunes. A six track EP is threatened on Flying Nun whilst plans beyond that are few. MH

MAINLY SPANIARDS
Richard James vocals, guitar
Nick Strong bass
Tony Green drums

Such is the very usage of the term pop in this day and age that

it tends to make the band uneasy and shy away from the term. More recently their onstage sound has tended to be rougher, belying earlier accusations of preciousness. Experiments with a second guitarist were abandoned. Green is a recent acquisition replacing initial drummer David Swift. MH

THEY WERE EXPENDABLE

Jay Clarkson vocals, guitar
Nick Strong bass
Donna Sheen vocals
Dave Toland drums

They Were Expendable have been a working unit since last October. Clarkson and Toland were previously in the Playthings, Nick Strong is also a member of Mainly Spaniards and Sheen presently being assimilated into the band, came from Thanks to Llamas. Be warned against Playthings comparisons/expectations. MH

YEN

Tony Peak guitar/bass/percussion
Michael Daley drums/percussion
Marianne Bullmore percussion
Lindsay Davis trumpet/bass/percussion
Michael Jeffris bass/percussion

Yen are still at rehearsal stage and will not appear in public until April. Yen is today's name in the same way that influences ("jazz, punk, beat, funk") are still being identified.

Michael Higgins

THE WORLD

Although the World includes two ex members of the Builders, Allen Meek on guitar and Malcolm Grant on drums, it is more an attempt to bring some fresh people into the Christchurch music scene which is becoming incestuous and stale. Andrea Cocks on violin, Bridgit Mulchay on bass and Charles Heywood the vocalist are all comparative strangers to pub performance. The material is new and almost completely original. Allen Meek

Jim'll Fix It

Jim Wilson's name isn't a popular one among many music people.

You'll hear a lot of bitching about him — some of it justified.

The city has four major pub venues and a nightclub — Wilson is involved in all of them. All the venues have been handled by different people at times, but they've all come back to Wilson. He makes them work.

Wilson got his start in music management in the mid-seventies with Ezzy Promotions, handling old-wave bands like Fat Bella. Seeing the Vauxhalls at one of the Strand dances in Mt Pleasant in 1979 turned him and he joined Phil Brennan's Strand Promotions.

Strand put bands like the Swingers, the Features and the Androids into the Hillsborough and later Wilson was responsible for beginning the early week specials at the Gladstone.

After a brief stint as a CBS sales rep, Wilson returned, snatching the Hillsborough from under the noses of Laura Mitchell and Rose Stapleton, who were putting all their energies into the Gladstone. Eventually he regained the Gladstone, which has never been the same since. There's a lot more to it than that, but the politicking is tedious and the facts contentious.

Wilson can always be counted upon to have an opinion, even if it does change every six months or so. At present he's right behind Flying Nun bands and those with the same spirit.

"There's been no suitable venue for Flying Nun type bands. The Star and Garter is the pits as a venue, but it's all they've got. But they wrecked the Gladstone. It's just hard explaining to a pub manager that his toilets were wrecked but he should book another fringe band next week."

Wilson feels one of the main evils in Christchurch at the moment is the rise of cheap cover-playing residency bands parading as new music. A band can play last year's Spandau Ballet songs, undercut the door charges of gigging bands and make a lot of money.

"It's hard explaining to a hotel manager that if he sticks to original music it'll be better in the long run."

Wilson maintains he has been good to bands, pointing out that the Hillsborough is one of the few pubs to pay guarantees.

"I've always stood for the bands' best interests."

Wilson's name went on the bottom of a letter written by his former partner Peter Waller and published in this paper. The letter was a bitchy sour-grapes tirade against the country's bands. It didn't exactly enhance the two promoters' popularity. As he promised in the letter, Waller went to Australia.

"That letter was written at a bad time. Peter and I were doing a really good job just keeping touring bands coming. We did South Island tours better than anyone else."

"Peter was getting up at 6am to do poster runs two or three times a week. He just grew frustrated with it all."

"But every so often you do something that keeps you going. The Dwarfs and the Clean at the Star and Garter was one of the things that kept me going last year. And Netherworld Dancing Toys at the Gladstone. It's the same sort of feeling I got out of working Toy Love and the

Swingers."

This year he may set up a "proper agency". He has also thought about running a seminar on the rock 'n' roll business. He sees the Mockers, Netherworld Dancing Toys and the Wastrels as hopes for the year.

That's Wilson's side of things. No doubt some people would have more to add on the subject. RB



PHOTO BY ALEC BATHGATE

The Good Shepherd

"Roger Shepherd is God," the graffiti went.

Today God has manifested himself in a Christchurch record shop. He is serving customers politely and helpfully. He speaks quietly, often with droll humour. It is a Saturday morning.

The Nun first flew in 1981 with the Clean's Tally Ho!, a single that now seems like a battle cry for South Island music — bright, confident, great tune and who gives a stuff about the recording quality?

Flying Nun's star has faded a little since the heady days of Boodle Boodle and Great Sounds Great but the fact remains that most of the best New Zealand music of the past two years has been on Roger Shepherd's record label. And it can't be called "minority interest" music either — last year Boodle was the largest-selling local rock/pop 45. It is the proceeds from the two Clean EPs that have kept the label going.

Most other releases — including, ironically, records from Christchurch bands — have lost money to some degree. (A notable exception has been the Gordons' album, which Nun helps distribute. It paid for itself in this country and has gone on to sell in America and Germany. Substantially completed in one midnight-to-dawn shift at Auckland's Harlequin, it is an object lesson in the dynamic, economical use of a big studio.)

Shepherd grins at the suggestion that Nun has been more of a Dunedin label than a Christchurch one.

"Yes. Christchurch has been a bit funny over the past couple of years. There are some very talented people about but things just haven't been working."

"It's just a matter of somebody motivating things enough. Christchurch was relatively buoyant when the Clean were here last year but it fell apart almost the day they broke up."

He believes a venue, like the Gladstone "working properly as it used to" is also a "very important" factor in a healthy music scene.

"A club if it was done properly would be helpful. But there'd be all sorts of problems. It needs a couple of people with real drive."

Around the city at the moment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



The Shrinking Man of Pop

This is no way to conduct an interview.

The only place to talk to Bill Dieren is at the scungy entrance of the old Sydenham Fire Station. The word bouncer would probably be an overstatement, but he is trying to act as a doorman at the party he has held to raise money to turn the building into a theatre.

The pubs have shut and people are pushing their way in. Dieren is awkwardly firm, not particularly effective. A note of anger is rising in his voice. He will further embarrass himself later on in the night when he asks the partygoers for donations.

The sad thing is, the theatre project will fall through before it can get underway because of problems with the landlord. But that's Christchurch. Or perhaps that's Bill Dieren.

Dieren has been an active but distinctly (perhaps deliberately) underground figure in the Christchurch music scene for years. His ventures (that seems a more appropriate title than "band" or "group") have ranged from the Velvet's minimalism of the Vacuum to free-form musical ensembles. He has also been the initiator of a number of theatre groups, the most recent being the Soluble Fish troupe, which released a very limited edition EP in January.

The chief value of Soluble Fish was that it brought something out of the ordinary into the world of rock 'n' roll pubs. The first few performances came over in a distinctly hammish way, some of the acting and singing was dire. But things came together with the EP, which stands as a good example of a genre which is fairly

rare in this country.

Dieren is probably best known for his work with the Urbs, who won last year's Christchurch Battle of the Bands with a truly superb performance, played in Auckland a few times, recorded at Progressive Studios and dissolved.

Dieren is notorious for the short life span of most of his bands. It's almost as if each time a band dissolves, it happens without its potential being fully developed.

"When you're playing with two or three people, after a while you exhaust what there is to play," he explains.

The tracks recorded with the Urbs, along with seven recorded on his own with Chris Knox's TFAC, will be released soon on Flying Nun.

Dieren has chosen to release the album under the name Max Quits, a pseudonym he used on the 20 Solid Krypton Hits compilation last year. It will be called Janet, a title stemming from a wild night with the Fall at Knox's place, when everything got called Janet.

With the Urbs he recorded new versions of songs he had written over the years with outfits like the Builders and Six Impossible Things. From a brief listen to a tape, the only disappointment is an inexplicable version of 'Bedrock Bay'.

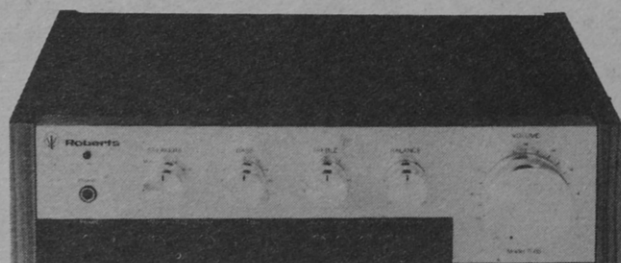
My guess is that further listening will prove it to be a good album — but one which will give that irritating feeling of unutilised potential. It'll be *deja vu*.

Dieren will be going to university this year to complete a PhD in English. If he can fit in with that some music and theatre, Christchurch will be a richer place for it. RB

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