

Men at Midem

New Zealand's representatives at last month's MIDEM trade fair in France thought their attendance at the record industry's international market would be little more than a gesture. They returned firmly convinced their trip had been more than that.

The MIDEM (Marche Internationale Du Disque Et De L'Addition Musicale) trade fair is held annually in Cannes and has been styled as the music industry's equivalent of the Cannes Film Festival. It is the largest event of its kind in the world and is attended by more than 6000 people from 60 countries. Attending for the first time, New Zealand sent five representatives. They were: Rocky Douche, Ray Columbus, Glyn Tucker Jr, Terence O'Neill Joyce and Keith Southern — representing a cross-section of Kiwi music from the Meemees to classical and ethnic records.

The trip was organised by Douche and helped out by the Trade and Industry Department under a "Limited Assistance Programme". The department paid for a stand at the fair, and some advertising and provided a marketing officer from Paris.

So, under the banner *The Other Side of Down Under*, the New Zealanders set up their small, open stall.

Within hours of the fair opening the New Zealanders had results. Options were taken out, some deals were signed on the spot.

The New Zealanders were amazed at the attention their stand got from major record companies. Much of the credit here must go to Television New Zealand's Peter Blake, who put together a video package of New Zealand acts, which ran continuously. Interest was expressed in showing the videos on an American channel which screens rock videos around the clock.

The Kiwi stand was an open one — unlike the tightly regimented Australian stand, where appointments had to be made to see any of the representatives. Prospective buyers could just wander in and talk.

And what actually came out of the fair? Most deals are unconfirmed, currently in the form of one to six month options.

One representative to secure a good number of confirmed sales was O'Neill Joyce, of Ode Records. He had mostly jazz, classical and ethnic recordings. He has been asked to put together, for the German market, a sampler of newer Polynesian music.

"We've sold 11 albums at a 14 per cent royalty," he said. "Even if we only sell 1000 a year, it'll be better than we've done here in the last five years combined."

O'Neill Joyce also gained a "very positive" response from a Swiss Record company to the Herbs' records. A New York company was also interested and another in the same city wanted to release a four track EP from the Hattie and the Hotshots' album.

But there was another side to success also. O'Neill Joyce bought the rights to market several records in both New Zealand and Australia — something that up until now has been rare.

Tucker, representing Mandrill

and other product, has an almost-confirmed German (and possibly the rest of Europe) deal for Danse Macabre. He also sold the Karl Gordon single 'Do You Believe' to Britain. There was also strong interest in Alastair Riddell and Penknife Glides.

Tucker said he would not be caught short of New Zealand product for next year's MIDEM.

Columbus was representing, among others, the Propeller and Hit Singles catalogues. He secured options from various countries on the Blams, Meemees, Hip Singles, Gurlz, Willie Dayson, Mockers, Midge Marsden and Lena Days.

Columbus said that interest came from all quarters — Japan for the Gurlz and virtually worldwide for the Meemees, Blams and Mockers. He was also able to sell a good quantity of MOR and country material.

New Zealand's maiden voyage into the big wide world was an auspicious one. If one tenth of the options taken out are picked up on, it will have been a stunning debut.

Douche, who had success with Dennis O'Brien and Geoff Clarkson, said his project with the Government over MIDEM had been a three year one.

He expected to be merely waving the flag this year, but with reasonable sales the project is already a year ahead of schedule.

He has already established a marketing pipeline to the USA and is to mount a "New Zealand music awareness" campaign.

"The Government was only prepared to help out if the stand was at MIDEM for three years," he said. "It looks like it'll be there for ever now."

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he sees Lyndon and the Liars, a rejuvenated Ballon D'essai and the group formed by former Clean bassist Robert Scott as good prospects.

"And I see the Bill Direen album as a very significant happening."

Further afield there is a "superb" Verlaines single awaiting release, one from Sneaky Feelings and the recently released Fetus Productions record.

"This year should be very interesting. I'm quite optimistic, even though people's spending power will be down because of the state of the economy."

"I think the Stones will do well, but they'll obviously never have mass appeal. Depending on what happens with the Chills they could be the next big thing. And the Verlaines should come through in the long run."

So at this point, with at least partial success behind him, is there anything Shepherd would change if he did it over again?

"Just the way it's been run, perhaps. It's depended on a group of interested people around the country helping out for nothing. I'd like to develop the idea of reimbursing them."

Shepherd recently rented out a "suitably sleazy" office in the central city and is seeking Labour Department assistance to employ Flying Nun's first full-time worker. He has someone in mind for the job but nothing can be said yet.

The employee would do the work that has nearly flooded Shepherd over the past year. Even (perhaps especially) on a small operation like Nun there are dozens of bills to be paid, orders to be dispatched and accounts to be chased up — things Shepherd has had to fit in with managing a busy record shop.

He hopes it will improve the label's distribution, especially overseas.

"We've sold some Clean EPs in Australia. You only have to sell a few overseas to make it worthwhile."

He thinks the sound quality of Nun records is gradually improving (as Chris Knox learns how to use

his TEAC?) but it's not easy.

"Usually neither the band or myself are in a position to afford high-quality recording. It would be great if I could afford to have everyone go into Harlequin but I can't."

There's no great worry. For all their hisses and squeaks Flying Nun recordings often have more presence and demand more attention than the big-budget stuff.

The label has already become bigger than he had envisaged — his initial idea being to simply help local bands release small quantities of records for those who wanted them.

"I don't really want to run Flying Nun full-time."

Could he ever see himself taking the kind of financial plunge Propeller Records did with the Meemees and Blams albums?

He pauses, thinks.

"I've got a lot of admiration for them doing that but perhaps it's a risk I wouldn't be prepared to take."

Russell Brown

Live

Battle of the Bands
Logan Campbell Centre,
March 12.

Ah, the joys of being a stranger in town.

"Logan Campbell Centre?" said the traffic officer. "Turn right at the lights about a mile down that way."

It was 800 metres away on the left. Anyway, I missed No Tag. I understand they played well.

Compulsory Allies were very young and obviously couldn't foot it with the other bands in terms of presentation or tightness. But they had far more promise than some of the more professional acts. They just need to work a few things out. The vocals were good, the horns were fine, but something is amiss in the rhythm section. Still, they've got plenty of time.

Next came 67 Listeners who were older, tighter and obviously

enjoyed their playing. The first few songs were good but after that things began to sound a little samey. They weren't bad but lacked a real edge.

Stark Naked came on bright, bouncy and smiling. The night's first real entertainers, setting about their task with gusto. They went down well but were perhaps a little let down by their songs.

A girl who can sing, dance and generally look like she knows what she's doing is a big help in a pop band. Day Centrale have such a girl. And not only that, the others are good movers too. The music was chirpy pop in keeping with the image. The future would appear to be very bright for Day Centrale.

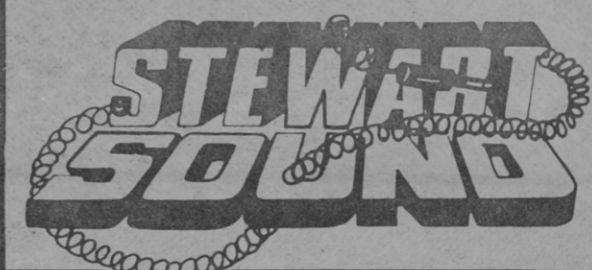
The Diehards gave more good pop, with Eddie hopping about in style. On this night I think they were shaded by Day Centrale, but they are obviously one of the few good young bands to come through of late.

Auckland Walk were by far the most experienced and professional act of the night. Their sound and presentation were faultless but the music got a little wearying. I don't really know what they're aiming at, it's not pop music but it's not really original enough to be considered "serious" music. Still, they had to go through for simply for doing what they did, whatever it was, very well.

Marginal Era were unlucky to be the last band up. Most of the crowd had left and what atmosphere that could be mustered in the cavernous concrete centre was leaking away. It would have been good to have seen the band in more sympathetic circumstances as Paul Agar is a fine frontman and singer. Still, their performance was an improvement on the one that got them into the final so they're definitely moving in the right direction.

In the end Stark Naked, Day Centrale, the Diehards and Auckland Walk were chosen, in no particular order, as the best of this first Auckland final. Probably a fair result, but a little unlucky for Marginal Era.

Russell Brown



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