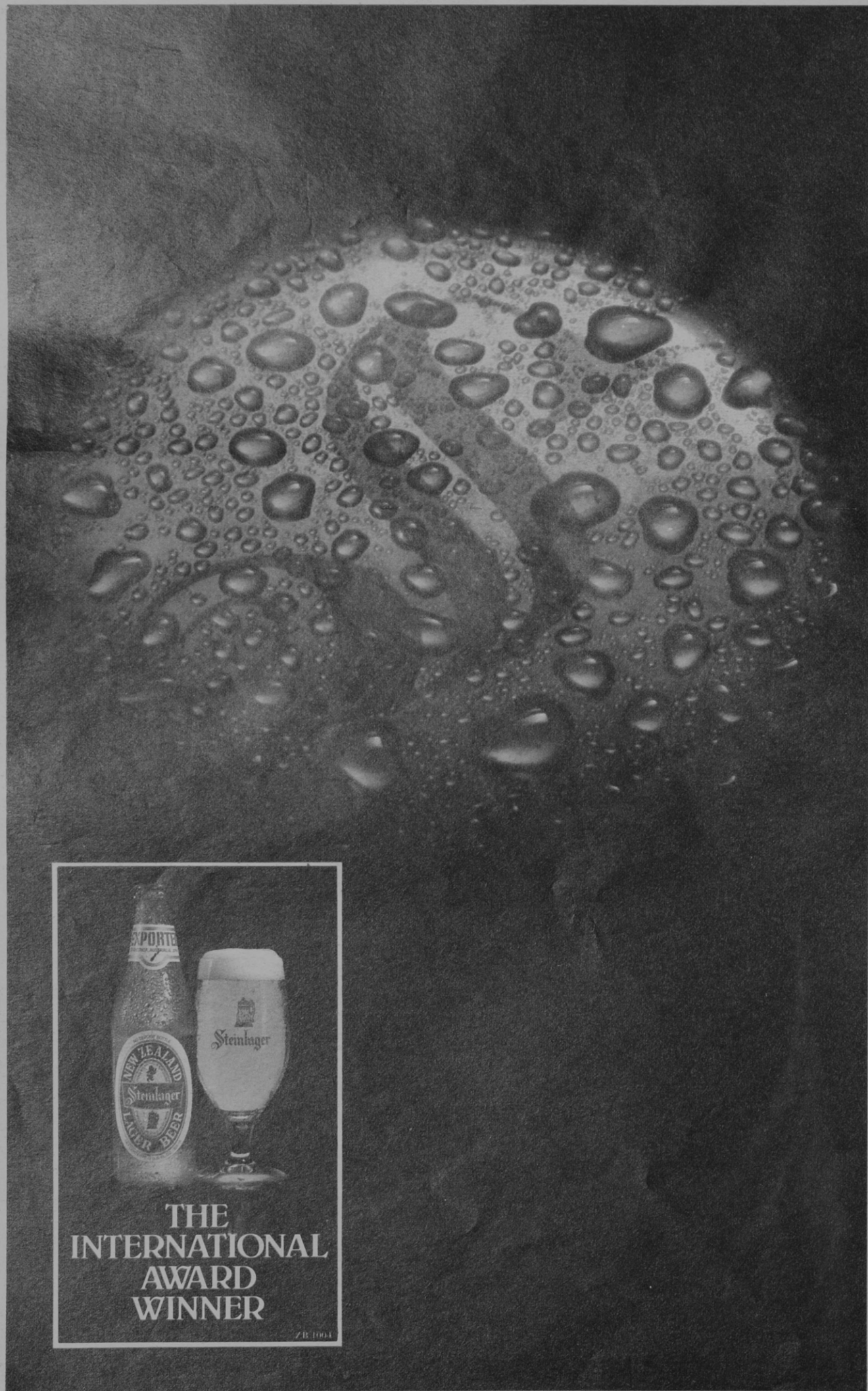


BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN IS A GREAT BAND

THE BOYS IN THE BAND BY GEORGE KAY



PHOTO BY KERRY BROWN



The chances of a David Bowie interview on this, the final leg of his world trek, were not bright. In Wellington, Leone Sakey, the tour publicist for the New Zealand dates, explained that the only press scheduled was an interview with Christchurch's Rob White. But in Auckland, she said, anything could happen.

On Saturday before the Western Springs event, attempts at softening the no-talk-to-press resolve met with further failure but interviews with various band members were arranged. The Sheraton, with its concrete menace belying a sumptuous and tasteful interior, was the venue.

A brief meeting with Leone Sakey placed editor/photographer Murray Cammick and I in the hands of tour press rep, Alan Edwards, a congenial Londoner, who had arranged for us to meet backing vocalists the Simms' Brothers and bassist Carmine Rojas.



George and Frank Simm

The Brothers Simm

An athletic handshake was our introduction to Frank Simm. Enthusiastic (gushing in fact), talkative and American, he was a direct contrast to his brother George whose heavy eyelids (the night before) hid a more taciturn character. Neither of them would see their mid-thirties again and for the last fifteen of their years they had been doing session work for various people, the most relevant being Chic as it was through Nile Rodgers that they became involved with Bowie. They sang on *Let's Dance*. Frank elucidated:

"We did three-quarters of the back-up vocals in one eight-hour session and touched them up the following day. And that was the album completed as all the other recording had been done."

Did Bowie give them any freedom to interpret things their way?

"We had carte blanche really," George added. "We horsed around and sang whatever came into our minds and David picked whatever struck his fancy, whether it was the Gilbert and Sullivan flavour of 'Ricochet' or the black female feel of 'Shake It'. David had no idea as to what he was going to have in the background and we added that little bit of icing on the cake."

Bowie's ability as a vocalist in a technical sense has often been under question. Is he a good singer?

"Yeah, he's very good, particularly as a balladeer," said Frank. "He's got a deep resonant voice that is also very expressive and true in that he rarely goes flat."

"When we were rehearsing in New York," explained George, "there were just the musicians as David was in Australia doing the video for 'Let's Dance' and so Frank and I would alternate doing all of his lead vocals. I could scarcely complete one day's rehearsal singing all of his notes. He's a work horse and if I had to sing as much as he does, I'd be a cripple."



Carmine Rojas

Carmine Rojas

At this point Alan Edwards appeared with bassist Carmine Rojas who, after quick introductions said he had to go back to his room to see his wife. Wife? On a world tour? We left

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