



Supergroove

see the word 'Shihad'. If those things don't happen, we'll fade into obscurity, and people will just talk about this awesome band called Shihad, who could have been the next big thing."

IT'S A GROOVE THING

Having notched up 45,000 sales of their debut album, *Traction*, Supergroove had reached saturation point in New Zealand when they cleaned up at the *New Zealand Music Awards* on April 12 this year. The band had toured Australia from January until March, but it was time to get them out of New Zealand for an even longer period.

Supergroove delivered their debut single, 'Here Comes The Supergroove', in August 1992. Three more singles — followed, 'You Gotta Know', 'Scorpio Girls' and 'Can't Get Enough' — before the band released *Traction* on major label BMG, in June 1994.

With a huge nationwide profile for Supergroove already in place, the band performed at the *BMG Asia/Pacific Conference* in Rotorua during October, in order to attract interest from overseas BMG representatives attending the conference. Kirk Harding, currently local and international repertoire manager at BMG in Auckland, was working in promotions at the time of the conference.

"Getting Supergroove in front of those people at the conference, so it gave them more of an idea about the band, was a key thing. Releasing the band overseas is all about making contacts at international conferences, and following through by sending them the band's releases."

In order to get a serious commitment from BMG territories overseas, Supergroove had to prove they were committed to the label. BMG New Zealand and the band signed a four album deal in February this year, opening the doors for Supergroove's big OE.

Having seen the band perform at *The Big Day Out* shows in Sydney and Melbourne, BMG Australia released *Traction* in March, and it was named Triple J's (Australia's only youth radio network) Album of the Week the following month. The band toured across the Tasman from April 13 until May 11, including performances at the inaugural *Alternative Nation* concerts. Album sales across Australia currently stand at 17,000, and the band return for a third tour in early November.

Supergroove hit the Asian region on May 12, although *Traction* had already been on the market for two months, having been released in 13 territories there, simultaneously with Australia. A week into the tour, they played at the *BMG International Marketing Conference* in Penang. As a result of that performance, BMG International added them to the 'long term artist development priority' list, worldwide. The other five artists on the list are Annie Lennox, Take That, Real McCoy, the Dave Matthews Band and H Blockx. Being on the list is of huge importance to Supergroove, as it means any territory worldwide that is hesitant to release *Traction* will be 'quietly persuaded' by BMG's head office that committing to the album is a good idea. Sales of *Traction* in the Asian region are well over 120,000, and Harding says Supergroove are being given 'star' treatment in certain countries.

"In smaller selling territories like India, they're playing to over 4,000 people and they get treated like Bon Jovi."

After spending six weeks (June 17 to July 29) touring in England, Europe and South Africa, Supergroove retreated to a manor in the English countryside and wrote six new songs, before commencing the second leg of the

European tour on September 9. By that stage, *Traction* was on sale in 16 territories in Europe. The United Kingdom has been the last region to fall into line, repackaging *Traction* as a six track EP for its October 6 release.

Supergroove land in New York on October 20 to play several showcase gigs in the USA, and one in Canada, for BMG representatives and selected media. Perhaps equal in power to Supergroove's inclusion on the 'magic' priority list, is the clout held by the band's American based management company, Larrakin. At the head of the table is Ted Gardiner, manager of Tool and Perry Farrell, and one third owner of the *Lollapalooza* road show. When Supergroove tour the USA proper in 1996, Harding expects Gardiner will have arranged for the band to tour as support for a major US band, and/or have scheduled the group to perform on the second stage at *Lollapalooza*.

"International management has been crucial. There is no way we would have got as far as we've got without having the likes of Ted Gardiner on board."

As in the UK, *Traction* will be released as a six track EP in the USA ("to prime the market place") in February next year.

Supergroove finally get to kiss home soil late October, but for four days only. Gigs in Indonesia, Singapore and Australia beckon, before they arrive back in Auckland for a long breather in mid-December. The follow-up to *Traction*, which has just reached quadruple platinum (60,000 sales) status in New Zealand, will be recorded at York Street Studios during the first two months of 1996, and is scheduled for New Zealand release on April 1. By that stage, most overseas territories will be ready for a new album also.

A MARKET FOR MUTTON

British newspaper reviews of the Mutton Birds' recent UK gigs have compared the band to XTC, the Byrds, and early Jefferson Airplane, while singer Don McGlashan was described as 'a visual mix of Robert Redford and Roger Daltrey'.

The band's first Northern Hemisphere jaunt began in Canada on May 1, and hit Europe in early September. They'll play six shows a week until the completion of the tour on November 26, then return home to write a third album. In the new year, they'll be back overseas almost immediately. The fast pace is being set by the Mutton Birds' manager, Daniel Keighley.

"It's imperative the momentum be kept up. We'll have spent nine months of this year on the road, and we'll be back in the UK and Europe, and probably North America, by February next year. If a band is unwilling to spend two or three years on the road in overseas territories, no record label is going to be even slightly interested in releasing them. Touring is the only way of keeping people excited if they are excited, and raising enthusiasm if they're not."

Keighley assumed the managerial role six months after the Mutton Birds delivered their self-titled (and self-financed) debut in August 1992. *The Mutton Birds* was released on the band's own label, Bag Records, so Keighley's first task was to shop around for a recording deal. While the band were recording their follow-up album, *Salty*, he nailed a deal with EMI Australia, and made the first of several exploratory overseas trips, including a visit to the Pop Komm trade fair in Germany. Although the Mutton Birds were under contract to EMI, Keighley met with representatives from all the major labels in the US, Canada, the UK, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, on the basis that if EMI or its affiliate labels wouldn't

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